



THE **FAN** ISSUE

MICHAEL BUBLÉ
A GIANT AMONG
HOCKEY DIEHARDS



The Hockey News



▲ ONDREJ
PALAT



▲ TYLER
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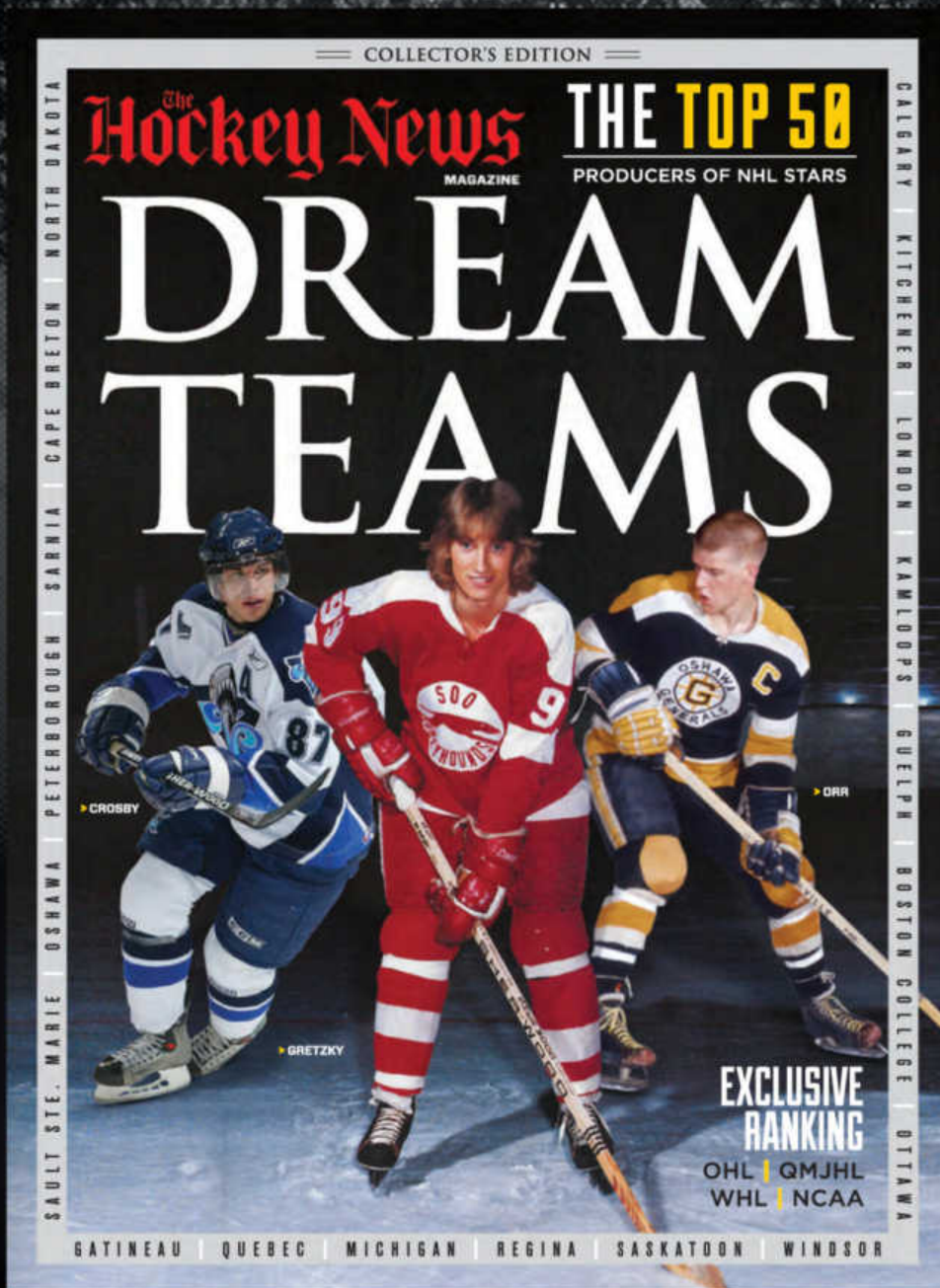
DOC EMRICK
SPENDING A DAY
WITH A FAN FAVORITE

TAMPA'S TRIPLETS

HOW THREE FAR-FLUNG NEWBIES
BECAME AN 'OVERNIGHT' SENSATION

NHL'S WORST SUFFERING FANS ... WHERE DO YOU RANK ON OUR **PAIN** METER?

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November 23, 2015
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FRONT ROW

Erik Karlsson takes ice-level seating literally after being checked into the Flames bench.

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The Barilko mystery grows as long-time Leafs fan claims to have the puck from the historic OT goal

By Brian Costello

ON THE COVER Ondrej Palat, Tyler Johnson, and Nikita Kucherov by Brian Blanco



24 Good Things Come In 3s

A Czech, a Russian and an American walk into a..... It sounds like a bad joke, but Tampa's Triplets are the most unlikely trio in the NHL. The Lightning's trifecta took the league by storm last season and doesn't expect to have separation anxiety in 2015-16

By Ken Campbell

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These five spoiled fan bases can't complain

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General managers can't have it both ways

ARE YOU SPOILED ROTTEN?

If you support the Wings, Pens, Oilers, Hawks or Habs, count your blessings. Your grass is way greener



I ATTENDED A GAME EARLY THIS SEASON, as a spectator in Toronto, and opted to eat dinner at the rink. I ordered two sandwiches and two beers. The damage: \$61. Even in Canadian funds, that stings.

On the basis of exorbitant prices alone, you could argue Maple Leaf supporters are the biggest victims/suckers in the NHL. We decided to go a bit deeper to develop our Fan Suffering Index, a ranking of the most woebegone supporters in the league. The results of Matt Larkin's painful research begin on pg. 20.

On the flip side, there are markets in which things consistently come up Laffeurs. Goals, wins and superstars are plentiful, sometimes taken for granted. Here are our top five most spoiled kingdoms:

1. Detroit. If you were born in 1991, you've witnessed the fall of the U.S.S.R., two gulf wars, three U.S. presidents and four Oilers first overall picks. One thing you haven't seen is the Wings miss the playoffs. It's like they have a permanent bye. Despite all that winning, tickets are affordable. You can get a 10-pack this season for \$350.

2. Pittsburgh. The hockey gods must have a thing for Allegheny County because every time it seems the Pens are dying, a savior is conjured and placed there. Mario Lemieux, Sidney Crosby, Jaromir Jagr and Evgeni Malkin have won seven of the past 27 Hart Trophies. No other team has more than three during that span, and 15 have none.

3. Edmonton. Yes, that's right. Oilers fans can still dine off the fact they were home to the greatest player of all-time during his prime, and all the glory and winning that went with it. Sure, there were lean times, but four first overall picks in six years? Edmontonians should be bowing before Gary Bettman, not jeering him.

4. Chicago. The Hawks have arguably the best all-around forward and defenseman in the game. They are arguably a dynasty. They arguably wear the NHL's best jersey. And they arguably have the best post-goal song in the league. Does anyone ever tire of *Chelsea Dagger*?

5. Montreal. While they haven't won it all since 1993, the Habs are the class of the NHL in terms of prestige, a badge their followers wear with pride. They've won roughly 25 percent of all Cups in the post-challenge era and been blessed with an unprecedented number of heroes. In the land of *Bleu, Blanc et Rouge*, the grass is always greener.

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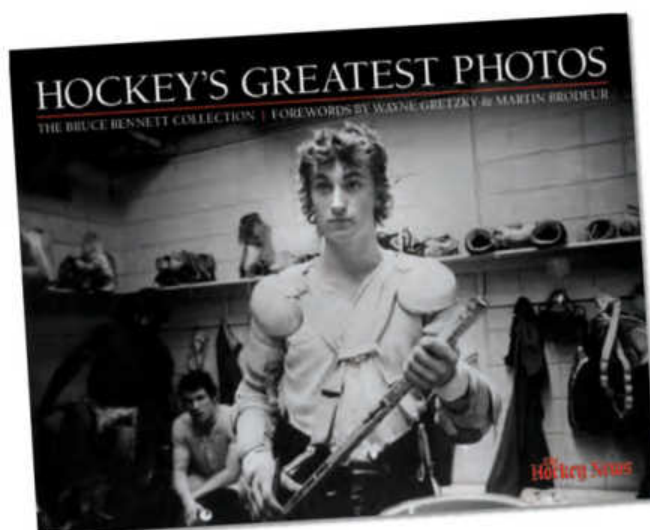
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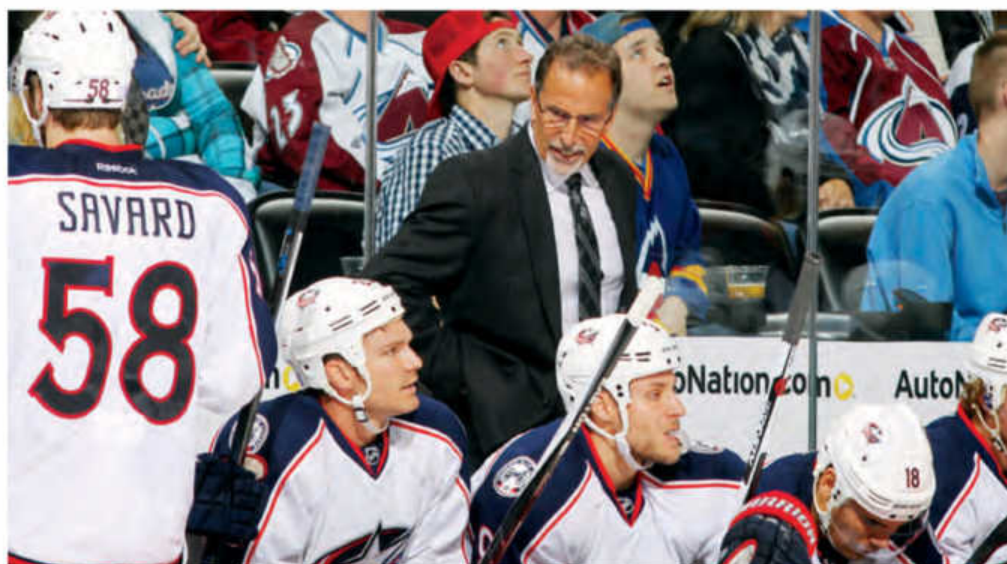
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INSIDE HOCKEY



SETTLE DOWN, IT'S STILL EARLY

Whether teams shoot or slump out of the gate doesn't mean a whole heck of a lot. The averages eventually even out

THE BLUE JACKETS' SEASON was pretty much done before it really began. Eight games in, and they didn't have a single point. Some holes are too big to crawl out of, and that's the situation Columbus put itself in to start the season.

But not every bad start is created equally. Zero of 10 teams over the past nine full seasons

have made the playoffs with five or fewer points in their first 10 games, but nine of 28 with six or seven points did (see sidebar).

Every extra point makes a difference, but it's also about how teams manage the puck. The average 5-on-5 Score-Adjusted Corsi for teams with fewer than five points was just 45 percent, meaning they weren't good

TORT-AL RECALL

The Blue Jackets brought John Tortorella back to the NHL in the hopes of a quick turnaround.

to begin with. Meanwhile, the teams with six or seven points that did make it were either good possession teams to start or made huge improvements after the first 10 games.

Bad starts usually come down to players not converting scoring chances and/or goalies letting in shots they'd usually stop. The average PDO – a combination of shooting and save percentages at 5-on-5 – of the 38 teams that started with seven points or fewer in the first 10 games was 96.7 percent. Over the next 72 it was 99.5, which is right around average.

That correction in shooting

and goaltending luck is the difference between those teams posting an average points percentage of .299 in the first 10 games and .499 in the next 72. Their possession stayed consistent (48 percent in the first 10 vs. 48.8 percent in the next 72), but they started getting the bounces, which meant more wins. Bad bounces won't continue, even for the worst of the worst, and few teams are as bad as their first 10 games appear.

On the flip-side, not many teams are as good as they look in their first 10 games, either, thanks to the opposite phenomenon. Goalies that can't be beat and shooters that can't miss can make a team look unstoppable, but it usually doesn't last. There were 37 teams that earned 15 or more points through their first 10 games, and their average PDO was 102.6. Over the next 72 games it was 100.1, with their possession numbers taking a slight hit, going from 52.3 percent to 51.2.

Teams that started hot did so because of great shooting and goaltending. Just like the slow-starters' PDO, however, it reverted back to average over the next 72 games. As a result, their points percentage dropped from .807 to .598. Still, the great start meant a big cushion that only six teams couldn't hold on to. Three of them were poor possession teams while the other three saw drops in their underlying numbers.

The point is not to put too much significance on how a team opens the season. Every team will have a hot or cold spell at some point, and there isn't any difference between the two other than the date it occurred.

Around this time in 2005-06, two teams seemed destined for opposing fates. The Edmonton Oilers slumped in their first 10 games with a 3-6-1 record while the Carolina Hurricanes surged to 7-2-1. Both teams were good puck possession teams to start the season, but the results were different. About seven months later, the two met in the Stanley Cup final. Trust the process, and the results will come.

— DOMINIK LUSZCZYNSZYN



CHRIS PRONGER
2005

SURPRISING STARTS

Getting off to a poor start doesn't guarantee you'll miss the playoffs (unless it's absolutely brutal), nor does a good start ensure you'll be playing in mid-April

16%

Teams that missed playoffs in past nine full seasons after recording 15 or more points in first 10 games (six of 37)

	VANCOUVER CANUCKS 2005-06
	CAROLINA HURRICANES 2007-08
	MINNESOTA WILD 2008-09
	CALGARY FLAMES 2009-10
	ST. LOUIS BLUES 2010-11
	TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS 2011-12

32%

Teams that made playoffs in past nine full seasons after recording six or seven points in first 10 games (nine of 28)

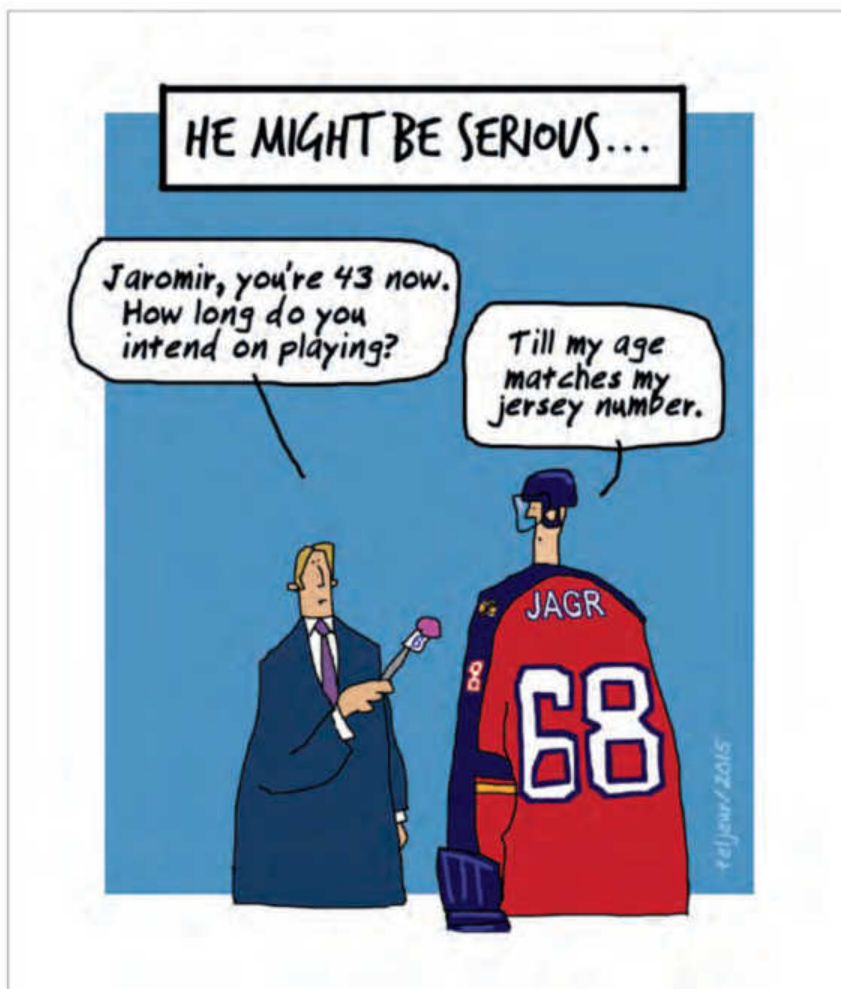
	EDMONTON OILERS 2005-06
	CALGARY FLAMES 2006-07
	NEW JERSEY DEVILS 2007-08
	NEW YORK RANGERS 2007-08
	NASHVILLE PREDATORS 2009-10
	BUFFALO SABRES 2010-11
	BOSTON BRUINS 2011-12
	NEW YORK RANGERS 2013-14
	PHILADELPHIA FLYERS 2013-14

0%

Teams that made playoffs in past nine full seasons after recording five or fewer points in first 10 games (zero of 10)

THE INSTIGATOR

By Charlie Teljeur



HOW TO SCORE FROM THE BENCH

THERE'S AN AXIOM IN HOCKEY THAT "YOU MISS 100 PER CENT OF THE SHOTS you don't take." Technically, that's not true.

It turns out an NHL player can be credited with a goal without touching the puck on the shift in question. It nearly happened on the second night of the season in a game between the St. Louis Blues and Edmonton Oilers. Off a faceoff in the Blues' zone while they were on a penalty kill, David Backes won the draw back to Alex Pietrangolo who attempted to clear the puck. His shot caromed off teammate Alexander Steen and pinballed directly past stunned goalie Brian Elliott.



Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, who lost the faceoff but got a piece of the puck on the draw, was credited with the goal. But had Backes won the faceoff cleanly, the last Oiler to touch the puck on the previous shift would have received the credit. In this case, it was Taylor Hall, who happened to stay on the ice for the power play.

However, even if Hall had been on the bench, the goal would have been his. He just wouldn't have been awarded a "plus."

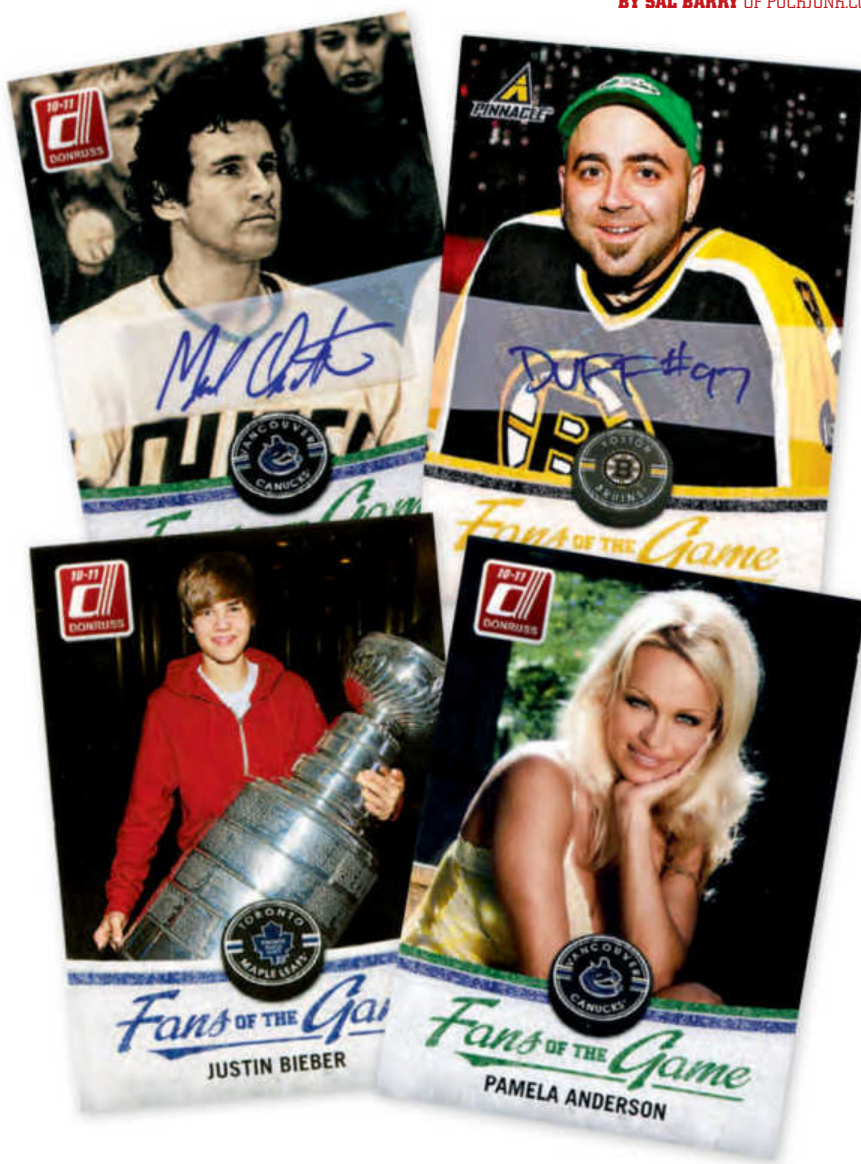


TAYLOR HALL

In The CARDS

SEVERAL PUCK-LOVING CELEBRITIES were highlighted in the “Fans of the Game” series from 2010-11 to 2013-14, randomly found in packs of Panini hockey cards. The cards detailed who each celeb’s favorite team is and why, and some cards even came autographed. Michael Ontkean of *Slap Shot* and *Twin Peaks* fame is a Vancouver Canucks fan. So is model/actress Pamela Anderson. *Ace of Cakes* star Duff Goldman roots for the Boston Bruins, while pop music heartthrob Justin Bieber – shown holding the Stanley Cup – loves the Toronto Maple Leafs. Hey Justin, shouldn’t you be wearing white gloves?

BY SAL BARRY OF PUCKJUNK.COM



BOOK REVIEW



TRAGIC TALES

Were Sawchuk and Kordic doomed? Was there more behind Masterton’s demise than just hitting his head?

WHEN A FORMER PLAYER passes away, the hockey community is saddened by the loss. But when a player dies in the midst of his career, it cuts much deeper. Over 160 pages, *From Triumph to Tragedy in the NHL* tells the stories of six players whose lives ended too early: Bill Masterton, Terry Sawchuk, Tim Horton, Pelle Lindbergh, John Kordic and Steve Chiasson.

First-time author Brad J. Lombardo does an admirable job of handling such a heavy subject. The book is thoroughly researched and recollects each player’s accomplishments, the events that led to their deaths and the aftermath.

The chapters on Sawchuk and Kordic are particularly strong. Lombardo details how both were already broken men by the time they reached the pinnacle of their careers. Their untimely demises seemed inevitable.

And while the much-told story about Masterton’s death is that he hit his head on the ice after being checked by two opponents, Lombardo gives several accounts that suggest other contributing factors. — SAL BARRY

CORRECTIONS In our Dream Teams Collector’s Edition, we identified Travis Roy as having played for Boston College instead of Boston University. And in our Oct. 26 issue, in Ken Campbell’s Overtime column it states the National Alliance for Mental Illness does brain imaging. NAMI, the United States’ largest grassroots mental health organization, does not offer any type of medical service. We regret both errors.



SHARING AND CARING

Can two pro teams live together in harmony? The NHL Jets and AHL Moose are proving it's possible

WHEN THE MANITOBA MOOSE returned to Winnipeg this year after four seasons in St. John's, Nfld., the team enjoyed a rare distinction: it became one of just two

AHL franchises to share the same arena as its NHL affiliate. The San Jose Barracuda, with their affiliate, the Sharks, are the other.

It's become a trend for NHL

PLENTY TO GO AROUND

Despite Winnipeg now being a Jets town, Josh Morrissey and his Moose have had good crowds.

“
AHL GAMES ARE MUCH MORE CONDUCTIVE TO FAMILIES AND LARGE GROUPS

– Dan Hursh

teams to keep their AHL squads closer to home. Excitement over the Jets' return to Winnipeg in 2011 has yet to subside and, according to Dan Hursh, vice president of operations for the Moose, the Jets' passionate fan base aided the Moose's return. “Certainly the success the Jets have had and the support they've enjoyed from the fans and the corporate community were factors that we looked at when we made that decision to bring the AHL franchise back to Winnipeg,” he said.

Hursh said the logistics of scheduling adequate practice time for the two hockey teams in the same arena hasn't been problematic but added, “It's certainly been a challenge.”

Having the Moose back in

Manitoba so Jets coaching and management can have better access to players is only one of the benefits. It's also good for Jets fans. “It's much more conducive to families, kids and large groups, teams and organizations that want to acquire a lot of tickets,” Hursh said, “both from a price-point standpoint but also because tickets are that much more available.”

Darryl Martel, a fan of the Moose since 1996, agrees. He said the lower cost of tickets is why he prefers AHL games to NHL games. “It's more affordable, and I don't mind seeing the up-and-coming talent,” Martel said. “The NHL is the end product, but the AHL is the up-and-coming product.”

And while it's great that fans get to see the prospects, it's good that the prospects get to see the fans and the community. “Having our Manitoba Moose players, the prospects, in the city and in the province allows them to see what it's like to be a professional in this city,” Hursh said. “This is the city where they are aspiring to be NHL hockey players, so they're learning to be professionals in this market.”

The continued sellouts the Jets enjoy, as well as the strong early-season turnouts for the Moose – an average of around 7,000 fans, including a sellout of 8,812 in their first game (only the lower bowl is used for AHL games) – indicate there isn't too much professional hockey in a city of 700,000 people.

– JOSHUA KLOKE

AHL SWITCHEROO



BEYOND THE ST.

John's IceCaps becoming the Manitoba Moose, six other AHL franchises found new homes and got new names/logos for the 2015-16 season. Some are obvious, some not so much. Can you trace the old teams to the new ones?

All 6 correct = You know your game. Kudos.
4-5 = Not too shabby.
2-3 = Better brush up.
0-1 = For shame.

— OLD —					
1 	2 	3 	4 	5 	6
A 	B 	C 	D 	E 	F
— NEW —					

Amwmsr:1-C-2-2-3-3-4-4-5-5-6-6-8



RETWEET IS THE NEW AUTOGRAPH

The majority of new-age fans say a signature is for the birds – they’d rather make a “real” connection

CHRISTOPHER DOYLE GREW UP idolizing Toronto captain Rick Vaive. Doyle loved Vaive so much he sent the Maple Leafs a letter asking for an autographed hockey card from his hero. Vaive sent a card back, and Doyle remembers to this day just how special the moment was.

But the value of the autograph is losing ground in the social media age. According to a recent survey of 1,000 fans by Twitter Canada, those who use the service value a retweet or social media engagement from their favorite player 1.5 times

more than an autograph. Doyle, who is Twitter Canada’s director of media partnerships, said the results were a revelation,

“ IF I’M RETWEETED OR GET A REPLY FROM MY FAVORITE PLAYER, THAT HAS A LOT OF VALUE – Christopher Doyle

but he understood why people feel that way. “Fans have this instant connection with players on Twitter,” Doyle said. “The re-

A THRILL FROM PHIL

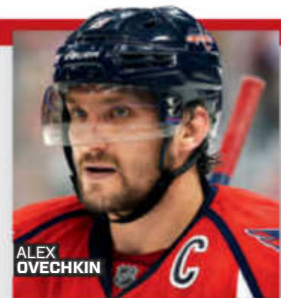
The rush of being acknowledged on Twitter by an athlete such as Kessel trumps a signed photo.

search shows they have a very personal connection with the players. Today it’s this digital autograph – if I’m retweeted or get a reply from one of my favorite players – that has a lot of value. There’s a social currency to it.”

Doyle said one factor is the erasure of barriers between fans and their favorite teams and athletes. For instance, when Alex Ovechkin came into the league in 2005-06, Twitter didn’t exist and fans could only keep up with ‘Alex The Great’ via traditional media. Now, Ovechkin is the most popular player on Twitter with more than 1.49 million followers (see sidebar), and his fans can see his Halloween costume, his dinner and what he’s up to in the off-season. They can also “speak” directly to him, which Doyle said makes a difference. “If Phil Kessel retweets my tweet when I said, ‘Great game, Phil,’ that’s going to mean an awful lot to me because I know I’ve actually (had that connection),” Doyle said. “It’s similar to having run into him.”

Doyle said he’s seen the way it hits people when they have that connection with an athlete. He’s had people come to him to talk about players they’ve interacted with and called the excitement “palpable.” Even still, though, Doyle believes there’s room for the physical autograph as well as the excitement of the social media interaction. “The context of the autograph might mean a lot,” Doyle said. “Is it on

a jersey or a puck that I got? Is it memorabilia related? It seems like that’s always going to have a place.” – **JARED CLINTON**



I THINK I’M BEING FOLLOWED

Ovie and Hawks lead lists of most-tracked players and teams on Twitter

- 1. ALEX OVECHKIN** (@Ovi8) – 1,489,614
- 2. EVGENI MALKIN** (@Malkin71_) – 1,143,473
- 3. PATRICK KANE** (@88PKane) – 754,358
- 4. P.K. SUBBAN** (@PKSubban1) – 682,970
- 5. HENRIK LUNDQVIST** (@HLundqvist30) – 536,484
- 6. STEVEN STAMKOS** (@RealStamkos91) – 386,049
- 7. CLAUDE GIROUX** (@28CGiroux) – 374,442
- 8. TAYLOR HALL** (@Hallsy04) – 370,793
- 9. T.J. OSHIE** (@TJOshie77) – 331,287
- 10. JOFFREY LUPUL** (@JLupul) – 314,001

- 1. CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS** (@NHLBlackhawks) – 1,131,343
- 2. TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS** (@MapleLeafs) – 1,048,376
- 3. MONTREAL CANADIENS** (@CanadiensMTL) – 912,762
- 4. BOSTON BRUINS** (@NHLBruins) – 816,209
- 5. PITTSBURGH PENGUINS** (@Penguins) – 710,686
- 6. VANCOUVER CANUCKS** (@VanCanucks) – 703,049
- 7. LOS ANGELES KINGS** (@LAKings) – 684,100
- 8. DETROIT RED WINGS** (@DetroitRedWings) – 661,425
- 9. NEW YORK RANGERS** (@NYRangers) – 565,222
- 10. PHILADELPHIA FLYERS** (@NHLFlyers) – 526,406



FROM EUROPE WITH LOVE

The Eurolanche have a hardcore Avs adoration – and not even a 30-hour commute will stop their invasion

I F THERE WAS A UNIT TO MEASURE fandom, David Puchovsky's dedication to the Colorado Avalanche would reach into the thousands – as in thousands of hours, dollars and miles.

Puchovsky, a native of Bratislava, Slovakia, is the founder and president of Eurolanche, an Avalanche fan club that was born in 2007 and boasts more than 530 members from 36 countries and keeps supporters connected to the team. And it's no wonder Puchovsky is so dedicated to keeping followers up to date. "I became a fan in 2000, but I watched my first game three years later because there was no way for me to watch," said Puchovsky, 25. "I had no internet connection – nothing. I just followed the text recaps and results on TV."

Eurolanche.com publishes stories, interviews and analysis in nine languages, and Puchovsky acts as the site's presi-

dent. It's his unique background in journalism that has helped build the site into a go-to source for information. During his days as a writer for one of the best-selling Slovakian daily newspapers, *Nový Cas*, Puchovsky helped locate three children who had been kidnapped and had them returned to their parents. It was a covert operation, with Puchovsky using fake identities and piecing together what little he knew about the kidnappers to track down the children, including two who had been missing for more than four years. "I located them and their abductor in Panama, Central America," Puchovsky said. "We went there and it was a two-week stay. We had to fly (the kids) secretly. Now it's OK, because the kids are home and the abductors are in jail."

Puchovsky will release a book about the kidnappings, called *Unesene* (Slovakian for *Kidnapped*), later this year.

He also maintains his adventurous spirit, which is exemplified by the "Eurolanche Invasion," a North American tour put together in Eurolanche's second year of existence. The goal was for members to travel to Denver to watch the Avs play live. After significant planning, Puchovsky and two fellow members made the first official trip in 2008. To get there, the trio travelled from Austria to Germany to Houston to Denver. All told, it took 30 hours. Thanks to a call to Colorado's PR department, the "invaders" had secured a few free tickets and the chance to meet and greet

RAREFIED AIR

Puchovsky, to Joe Sakic's right, and the Eurolanche crew get unique access during "Invasions."

the team post-game.

Puchovsky recalls his first live game like it was yesterday – a 4-3 victory for Colorado Dec. 27, 2008 over the rival Detroit Red Wings. Ruslan Salei scored the opening goal and the Avalanche blew a 3-0 lead before countryman Petr Budaj helped Colorado win in a shootout.

The Eurolanche have since been back several times. One trip saw the group at a game against the Oilers in Denver before piling into a car and making a non-stop trip to Minnesota to watch a road game against the Wild. But for Invasion VIII, Eurolanche are preparing for their biggest trip yet: a two-week excursion that will include the Stadium Series game against the Red Wings. Twelve members will make the trip, a Eurolanche record.

The Invasion will be special for Puchovsky, too, as he'll hit a milestone and surpass his 40th live game. They won't be his last games, though, and he's got one special set of contests in mind. "If they make the Stanley Cup final, we will come back," Puchovsky said. "If I know I will have a job when I come back, I will definitely go for at least two games." – **JARED CLINTON**

FAR AWAY FANDOM

The Avs aren't alone having supporters around the world. These clubs trot the globe to cheer on their teams, too



JIM TAMAN'S GRANDFATHER

unknowingly planted a seed for the Habs in Western Canada when he gave Jim a jersey. Jim has been a loyal fan for almost 60 years, and for almost half that time, he has been bringing supporters together. Twenty-six years ago he formed the Western Canadian Montreal Canadiens Fan Club. It now has 20,000 members spanning 17 countries plus every province, territory and state in North America.



THE BRITISH PENGUINS FAN

Club keeps supporters across the United Kingdom up to date on everything Pittsburgh hockey. It's relatively new, founded in 2013, but it has plenty of followers, including more than 5,000 on Twitter at @BritPens-FanClub. Members of the club call themselves "Brinzers" and, like the Eurolanche, some have ventured "across the pond" to catch a Pens game.

– **MALCOLM CAMPBELL**



THE **FAN** ISSUE

THE SU



PERFAN

Full-time crooner, part Giants owner and all-time Canucks superfan, Buble dreams of taking his unconditional love for the 'Nucks to the next level

BY MATT LARKIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVAAN KHERAJ

Ls it really Nov. 5, 1991, at the Pacific Coliseum? It's printed on the tickets and programs. But you'd swear it was playoff time. The 16,000 Vancouver Canucks faithful quake with anticipation. It's finally time to see what *he* can do, the brash young Russian kid, imported from the Red Army who goes by the name of Pavel Bure. The hype is so great that coach and GM Pat Quinn delayed Bure's debut a game so it wouldn't steal thunder from Stan Smyl's jersey retirement.

And in the blink of an eye, Bure takes his first stride toward becoming the franchise's greatest player ever. He carries the puck the length of the ice, splitting the Winnipeg Jets defense. He's so fast his body arrives in the slot before the puck. He has to kick it back to himself to finish the breakaway with a deke. He doesn't score, but it doesn't matter.

Especially to a 16-year-old kid named Michael Buble, attending with his grandfather. As season ticket holders, they never miss a game. And yet Buble still has never seen or

felt anything like this. "I literally and figuratively sat on the edge of my seat and bounced like a horse, like I was riding a horse, and as you looked around everyone else was doing it, too, everyone was almost jockeying," Buble said. "It was electric. Everyone was like, 'Oh my god, we have never had a player like this before. Not just a good player. We have a genuine superstar.'"

Little did Buble realize at the time, he'd one day bring thousands to their feet in packed arenas the same way Bure did. Except Buble, now 40, did it with his voice, not his feet. He developed a passion for crooners, jazz and soul music, listening to his grandfather's huge collection of records. Buble idolized the likes of Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra. His granddad, a plumber, was so convinced his grandson would become a musician some day that he'd offer his plumbing services to other performers in exchange for stage time for Buble. By 17, one year after witnessing the Russian Rocket's launch, Buble had won the British Columbia Youth Talent Search competition. Former

Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney discovered Buble's independent album. Buble eventually got signed by mega-producer David Foster and is now one of Canada's most successful recording artists, with half a dozen multi-platinum albums and Grammys galore.

But if you're a music buff, you probably know that about him already. What you might not know, though, is that worldwide fame did nothing to quell his other life passion: hockey.

Buble jumps at the chance to put aside music and talk about anything to do with the sport. He's as much a superfan as any rabid late-night sports radio

caller. He says hockey was even more important to him than music when he was growing up. As a kid, he'd pretend he was the Canucks' Patrik Sundstrom or Tony Tanti. He grew to love longtime captain Trevor Linden and, of course, Bure. Buble felt the anguish of the 1994 Stanley Cup loss to the New York Rangers in Game 7. "It was heart-breaking, because we truly were so close," he said. "We were a post away. A crossbar away. And some s---ty refereeing away."

For Buble, 2011 was even more devastating. He was a bona fide music star by that point, and his love for the Canucks didn't waver one bit. He postponed a concert so he could fly home to Vancouver and catch Game 7 on home ice against the Boston Bruins. And the riot after the 4-0 defeat was crushing for him, particularly because he so fiercely believed the malice of a few put a black mark on the people of his city. Buble took out newspaper ads thanking the Vancouver Police and Fire and Rescue for their help during the riot. "It didn't take long for Vancouverites to realize it wasn't Vancouverites doing this," Buble said. "It was a bridge-and-tunnel crew of trailer trash that decided they were going to create anarchy. Whether we won or lost, it didn't matter. They already set it up."

Today's Canucks are less in the international spotlight than



**WE TRULY
WERE SO
CLOSE. WE
WERE A POST,
A CROSSBAR
AND SOME
S---TY REFFING
AWAY**



CELEBRITY FANS

Star power isn't restricted to Hollywood. The stars come out nightly throughout the NHL.



VINCE VAUGHN • CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS



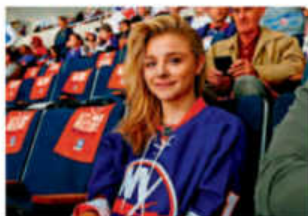
MARGOT ROBBIE • NEW YORK RANGERS



WILL FERRELL • LOS ANGELES KINGS



JON HAMM • ST. LOUIS BLUES



CHLOE GRACE MORETZ
• NEW YORK ISLANDERS

the 2011 team. They do leave many of us scratching our heads as we evaluate their decisions, though. One minute they're trying to contend, signing vets Ryan Miller and Radim Vrbata to rich contracts. The next they're jettisoning the likes of Eddie Lack and Nick Bonino, clearing space for youngsters like Jacob Markstrom, Jared McCann and Jake Virtanen. Rebuilding? Who knows? But Buble supports president Linden and GM Jim Benning. "They are class acts and they love hockey, they really do, and they love the city," Buble said. "What makes me happy is the fact they have a plan about the future. They are not as worried about doing it now with a cheap, quick rebuild."

Buble insists any "real Canucks fan, not the Toronto Blue Jays fan types" believes in the team vision. He has immersed himself in the team whenever he can. He suited up and practised with the Canucks in 2011-12. The players thought he looked pretty decent out there. He almost beat then-goalie Roberto Luongo on a breakaway, hitting the crossbar. Buble donated \$100,000 to Kevin Bieksa's charity hockey game during the 2012-13 lockout, too. He also spent some time with Lack before he was dealt to Carolina, and Buble thinks the world of him. They bonded this past summer playing in Montreal Canadiens Brendan Gallagher's Celebrity Softball Classic. "(Lack) is a loveable sweet guy, and I hope he kicks ass, and I hope he becomes the No. 1 guy and wins the Vezina Trophy in Carolina," Buble said. "I would love that."

As much as it saddened Buble, it made sense for Lack to go. He trusts Ryan Miller as the Canucks' backbone in goal and feels a veteran stopper is a crucial safety net for a team getting younger everywhere else.

In theory, it should be a lot tougher these days to keep tabs on his favorite team. Buble is now married to Argentine ac-

tress and model Luisana Lopilato and father to Noah, age two. They have another child on the way. So it's harder to juggle his globetrotting career and family. But his devotion to hockey never dies. "Every night, I watch every game, I watch every team," he said.

He recently attended a New York Rangers game with NHL commissioner Gary Bettman



I LOVE THE BUSINESS AND I WANT TO BE PART OF THAT. I DON'T NEED TO BE A MASCOT SITTING IN THE SEATS



HANDS-ON OWNER

Buble keeps tabs on his Giants players, such as 2016-draft-eligible Tyler Benson.

and deputy commissioner Bill Daly and discussed the state of the sport. Buble is a big fan of 3-on-3 overtime, and he's bursting with other ideas. He wants to see scoring increase, and he pitched Calgary Flames president Brian Burke on penalizing players who leave their feet to go down and block shots. Buble also champions a friend's idea of making the goal posts oblong so pucks will ricochet into nets easier.

And Buble doesn't table these suggestions simply as a fan. He's an owner. The seeds were planted in 2006, when Buble performed at a private dinner during the 2006 World Junior Championship in Vancouver. The tournament chair was Ron Toigo, owner of the WHL's Vancouver Giants, who held the party at his mother's home. Buble "fell in love" with the whole Toigo family, and he and Ron became close friends. "For the attention people demand of him, and the capacity he has to give to people, I don't think there is anybody like him," Toigo said. "He's the most amazing guy there is. Because a lot of those guys just shut the rest of the world out, and it's much easier to operate that way. But he doesn't. He has time and compassion for everyone. It is very unique at that level of fame."

Buble and Toigo would have beers together, watch hockey together and play hockey together. "All he wants to do is score goals," Toigo said with a laugh. "He's a great north guy, not so much going south."

And one day during a round of golf, the pair were discussing Buble's dream of owning a hockey team. Toigo figured major junior was a great place to start and offered him a stake in the team. "I said, 'Ron, I'm in, 100,000 percent,'" Buble said. "I called my dad and said 'Dad, what do you think?' He said 'Mike, let's do this. This is

VAUGHN: TASOS KATPODIS/GETTY IMAGES; ROBBIE: JAMES DEWANE/GETTY IMAGES; FERRELL: JUAN OCMPO/GETTY IMAGES; MORETZ: MIKE STOBIE/GETTY IMAGES; BUBLE: BENSON: CI RELIEVE/VANCOUVER GIANTS

awesome.' I mean, imagine the fact that I walk in, and I am an owner, and I'm standing there with my arms folded, and to my left is Gordie Howe and to my right is Pat Quinn. And these are my peers at this point. It was fun and incredible."

Buble became a minority owner in 2008, joining Howe and Quinn. He attends Giants games whenever he can, and he secured a WHL package for viewing games on his computer when he's on the road. Toigo hears from Buble all the way from Argentina in the middle of games, offering his opinions on goals and defensive schemes. Buble's father, Lewis, a retired salmon fisherman, attends virtually every Giants game. Buble

also bought a luxury box, which he named "The Superhero Suite" at the Pacific Coliseum, now the Giants Arena. It's devoted to the BC Children's hospital. Young patients and their parents and even doctors get to take in games. "For me it's not just about hockey and getting to be a part of a sport I love so much," he said, "but it's also about community, about getting to give back to a place that gave me everything I have and taking a lot of stress off the minds of these kids and their parents and the doctors."

He feels a special connection to all children's hospitals because of what he and Luisana endured with Noah this past summer in Buenos Aires. Noah was scalded with water in an accident at home and had burns on six percent of his body. He has recovered fully, but the trying experience gave Buble an appreciation of what families go through when they have a child suffering from life-threatening conditions.

Buble is convinced his Vancouver Giants will contend again in years to come after several down years in a row. He even hopes they'll host a Memorial Cup soon, after they lost their 2016 bid to Red Deer. But

he has more grandiose dreams bouncing around in his head. Does he dream of owning the Canucks someday? First off, he says his ultimate dream is to be Spider-Man or Superman, to have legit super powers. He kind of means it. But since that isn't going to happen, yes, owning an NHL team is very high on his list. He says he's come quite close to NHL ownership, though he won't name names or teams. "There has been a lot of stuff that has been really close, a lot of negotiating, but it hasn't been right for me just yet," he said. "I will say this: I have no intention of being a mascot, understand? I don't want to talk about other celebrities in other sports, but... If I do this, it is because I really love the game, I love the business and I want to be a part of that. I don't need to be a mascot sitting in the seats. I'm already a Canucks season ticket holder."

So if Buble takes the NHL ownership plunge, it won't be for show. He won't be that famous person who claims to be an owner but "actually owns 0.0001 percent of the team," as he puts it. He's a real fan, maybe the game's biggest celebrity fan. He can dare to dream about joining the NHL down the road. Given what he's accomplished in life to date, it's best not to bet against the guy. **TMN**



DENIS LEARY • BOSTON BRUINS



TOM HANKS • LOS ANGELES KINGS



MIKE MYERS • TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS



CM PUNK • CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS



VINCE GILL & AMY GRANT
• NASHVILLE PREDATORS

RUBBING SHOULDERS

Buble joined an ownership group including the man to his right, Pat Quinn. On Buble's left is his dad, Lewis. On the far left: owner Ron Toigo.



A DAY WITH DOC

With a PhD on his resume, Mike Emrick is the ultimate student of the game. And his meticulous preparation has made him one of the NHL's best ever to sit behind a mic

BY ALAN BASS

On a crisp October morning in Philadelphia, Mike 'Doc' Emrick briskly strides through the hallways of the Wells Fargo Center. Wearing a Bowling Green State University polo shirt – a nod to the school where he earned his PhD in communications, hence the nickname – and an NBC Olympics windbreaker, he's all smiles. Although he has broadcast more than 3,000 professional hockey games, the game that is most important to him is always the one he's about to call.

It's 10:30 a.m., but Emrick was up early, taking the train from Connecticut where he and his wife of nearly four decades have been visiting family. Hockey is his passion, but his life always has and always will revolve around his wife, Joyce, their menagerie of two dogs and seven horses, and the many trips they take together throughout

each year. But for the entirety of this morning's three-hour train ride, his focus is on his work. As NBC's lead hockey play-by-play broadcaster, he has perused dozens of pages of game notes, statistics, historical facts and stories, just as he does every day in preparation for calling a game. Today, it's for the Blackhawks vs. the Flyers.

As Emrick, 69, walks at ice level toward an empty dressing room to unpack his belongings, he's swarmed by dozens of people. Some are old friends, players, coaches or fellow media members, others are trying to meet him for the first time. He is genuinely happy to see each of them and spends as much time with them as possible before he has to excuse himself to get to the morning skate. Preparation for NBC's signature Wednesday Night Rivalry matchup beckons.

For a man who is so well known in the

hockey world, Emrick seems rather shocked at the admiration he garners. After the morning skate, he runs into four members of the 2014 United States Olympic silver medal-winning women's hockey team, in town for a charity event. As honored as they are to meet the man who made their names known throughout the U.S., he looks just as humbled to meet them. He chats casually with the four of them for nearly 10 minutes, discussing their careers and the newly formed NWHL. It's the start of just another typical game day in the life of one of hockey's most legendary voices.

Growing up a diehard Pittsburgh Pirates fan in rural Indiana, Emrick had little opportunity to watch hockey. Every gym and stadium in the Hoosier State was reserved for basketball on a weekly basis. The closest pro hockey team was in Fort Wayne, more than 40 miles away. But as a teenager in 1960, he finally convinced his parents to take him to a Fort Wayne Komets game (an International League team at the time but currently in the ECHL). He was immediately hooked. "I mean, there was chicken wire around the boards," he said with a chuckle. "Guys who played it were stitched up. The goalies didn't wear masks. It was just a game that required an inordinate amount of courage to play. The collisions, and everything else about it, just struck me as a wonderful sport."

Despite his lack of understanding for the game at the time (he was surprised the

bluelines didn't get sucked into the Zamboni as it drove over them), he immersed himself in it and decided this was the sport for him. While doing an assignment for a college speech class, Emrick requested a few minutes with the team's broadcaster Bob Chase, now nearing his 90s and in his 63rd season as the voice of the Komets, and got his chance to pick Chase's brain about the world of broadcasting. "I still have the interview tape," Emrick said. "Most people in that situation would probably give you 10 minutes and say, 'Well, I wish you good luck,' and that would be it."

Emrick took the lessons to heart, learning how crucial it is to take a few minutes of his time to help someone else.

Walking from Philadelphia's dressing room to Chicago's after the morning skate, Emrick spots an 11-year-old boy in a heavily autographed Blackhawks jersey standing with his dad in the hallway. After chatting with him for a few minutes, Emrick discovers the young fan spent the summer coming up with his list of the top 100 all-time NHL players and wanted to share it. Emrick's eyes light up. He sits in the hallway beside his newest friend, debating the rankings: Bill Mosienko versus Bill Cowley, Frank McGee versus Sprague Cleghorn, Mario Lemieux versus Jaromir Jagr and more. After a lengthy conversation in which Emrick seemed to learn more than the young fan, he tells the kid's father, "I want a photocopy of that," and walks back to the stands. "He must have really done his homework," Emrick said. "None of those guys played when he was alive. Here's a kid who went to the trouble of looking up guys he never knew and will never see play the game."

Emrick shares the young fan's studiousness. At 69, he's still a student of the game. For tonight's contest, he has a binder filled with information on every player, statistics, trends, historical facts and stories he's kept in his pocket for years until just the right moment. But the most important part of his broadcast is what he calls the "Idiot Sheet," a two-sided card he created decades ago in the minors. The card includes all of the

FAN FRIENDLY

Emrick analyzes a Hawks fan's list of the top 100 players with his dad.

information pertinent to tonight's game in color co-ordination, including rosters, line combinations, other games being played, team stats and league standings. He also keeps three columns blank on the back to add everything he learns during his morning routine, including famous hockey birthdays, information on the Blackhawks' newest Stanley Cup ring and anecdotes from players and coaches.

Above all else, Emrick is a pure fan. He's enthused by those players who toiled in the minors before making it to the NHL. While other media members surround the superstars prior to the game, Emrick quietly talks with rookie defenseman Brandon Manning about riding the bus in the AHL before beating out a veteran NHLer for the final roster spot this season. He talks with Blackhawks left winger Ryan Garbutt, who spent time in three different minor leagues where he had happily played for \$400 a week before finally getting a spot on an NHL roster. The stories he collects are filed away for use at just the right time – that night, weeks or even years later.

As the game nears, Emrick appears in the broadcast booth at 6:00 p.m. a completely different man. Gone is the playful smile and casual personality. Suited up for the pregame taping, he now radiates an aura of focus and intensity. His expression indicates the importance of this night. Every broadcast is an opportunity to garner a new fan for the sport he loves most, creating a chance to make a lasting impression on someone tuning into a hockey game for the first time. He takes his job as seriously as every player and strives for perfection each time.

DOING HIS HOMEWORK

Emrick prepares a color-coded "Idiot Sheet" for every game he calls.

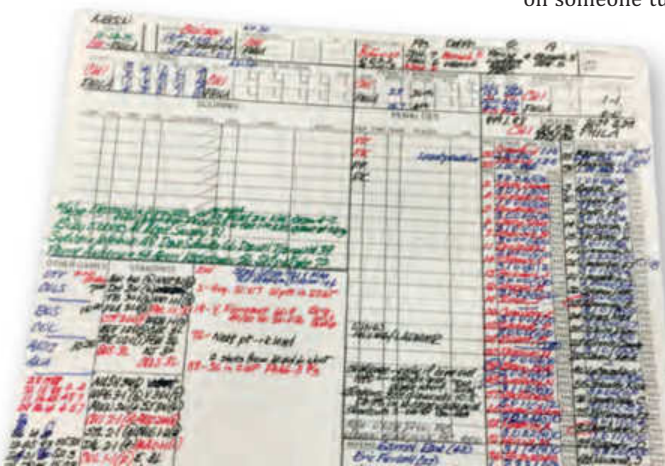


Once the game starts, though, it flashes by in a blur. The stage manager hands Emrick countless notes every few minutes that he is expected to work seamlessly into his call, all while flawlessly painting a picture of 10 players moving simultaneously up to 30 miles per hour on a sheet of ice. Production crewmembers frequently chatter into his headset, video co-ordinators assemble highlight reels, and Emrick is handed more notes and tidbits. It's chaos to those unfamiliar with the game, but Emrick articulates the action with artistry. He does it with precision and accuracy, rarely looking at his cheat sheet, as if he has memorized hundreds of pages of notes in just a few hours.

Through the three-hour broadcast, Emrick sprinkles in more goodies learned throughout the day, many of which are written on his Idiot Sheet: Manning's AHL experience, Matt Read's time at Bemidji State, tidbits gleaned from conversations with both coaches, birthday wishes to former players and even something Flyers right winger Jakub Voracek said to him earlier that morning: "This is the greatest job."

Emrick feels similarly charmed. In the midst of the second period, after a series of exciting back-and-forth plays, he leans back in his chair smirking, turns to fellow game analyst Eddie Olczyk and chimes on-air, "Isn't this great?"

As the final buzzer sounds on a 3-0 Philadelphia win, Emrick signs off after another broadcast. Almost as quickly as he came, he bolts out of the booth with a smile and a wink, leaving for a limo ride back to Connecticut to reunite with his wife. Tomorrow, he'll begin preparing for the most important game of his career. **THIS**



FAN SUFFERING INDEX

By Matt Larkin

It's human nature to vent at the end of a hard day. We crash onto our couches with a sigh and share our hellish tales with a friend or spouse. Stuck in traffic. Computer crashed. Coffee spill. "That's nothing," might be the response. "Wait until you hear about *my* day." And the sympathy competition ensues.

Team sports among fans can bring out the same sentiment. Supporters of long-suffering squads lament the lowest points in franchise history, and each team's fans feel they have it the worst. Blue Jackets supporters have watched multiple first-round picks leave for Russia, and they've made the playoffs twice in 14 seasons. "That's nothing," a Blues fan might retort, as St. Louis hasn't won a Stanley Cup once in 47 seasons of existence and hasn't reached a Stanley Cup final since 1970, when Boston's Bobby Orr ended the season with his flying overtime winner.

So which NHL fan base deserves our deepest sympathies the most?



Is there a way to quantify the misery produced by every crushing playoff loss or tragedy or departure of a star player? Only one way to find out. We introduce to you the Fan Suffering Index. We've ranked all 30 NHL franchises in six statistical categories to determine the most beaten-down bunch. We use team lineage for clarity's sake. So Quebec Nordiques fans have "followed" the team to Colorado, for instance. The numbers we've tracked are from the first post-expansion season, 1967-68, and on. Why compare the 47-year-old Blues to the 16-

year old Nashville Predators, though? Because the time bias matters. We had to properly weigh not just bad results, but many years of bad results. The new Thrashers/Jets franchise has missed the post-season 13 times in 15 seasons of existence, and the few original Atlanta fans watched their team leave for Winnipeg. But can that compare to what Blues or Leafs fans have endured over close to five decades without a championship? The Fan Suffering Index is about prolonged pain. With that, we ranked teams in the following categories:



TICKET PRICES

This is our most straightforward category. The prices are provided by Team Marketing Report's most recent Fan Cost Index, conducted in 2014-15. The only thing worse than watching your team lose is paying top dollar to do so.

No team feels that pain more than the Toronto Maple Leafs, whose Air Canada Centre patrons shell out on average \$113.66 per game for a poor product. Second place? Bruins fans at \$88.70 on average. That's a whopping 28 percent difference. The Leafs charge 240 percent more than the league's cheapest average ticket, belonging to the Florida Panthers at \$33.39. Toronto fans lap the field in financial misery.

PLAYOFF BERTHS

Missing the big dance doesn't rival the anguish of, say, losing Game 7 of the Stanley Cup final, but it's quietly deflating knowing your team doesn't have a chance to compete for the chalice, especially in an era of parity, when the Los Angeles Kings have won the whole thing as a No. 8 seed and countless other David teams have pushed Goliaths to the brink.

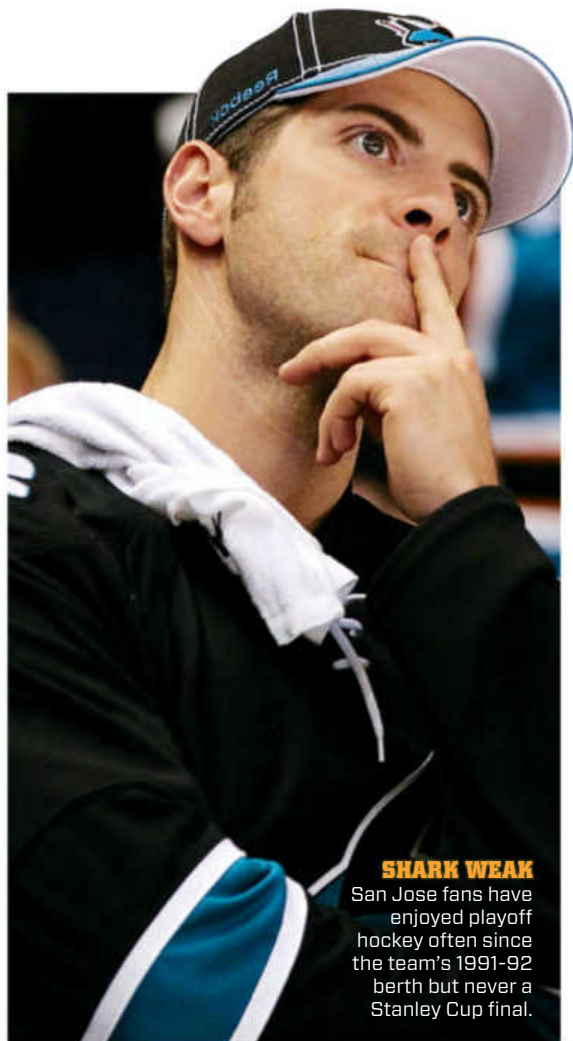
This category is weighted for time, relying not on a team's success rate but on simply how many times it missed the playoffs. Toronto and Vancouver have sat out the post-season 20 and 17 times, respectively, over the time period we used for the FSI. That's a lot of golf in April. It's a testament to how futile a team like the Florida Panthers has been when it still finishes in the top three, having reached the playoffs just four times in 21 seasons of existence. There has been very little to cheer about in Sunrise since the team's magical, rat-infested run to the 1996 Stanley Cup final.

One subjective decision we made for this study: doing everything in our power to bury any team with a recent Stanley Cup. Blackhawks, Kings and Red Wings fans deserve absolutely no sympathy in the FSI. They are spoiled and should be swept under the rug. We thus produced a "Cup penalty" in the playoff category, docking significant points for Cups since 1967-68 with the punishments weighted by decade. The most recent camps, Chicago and L.A., lost the most points, naturally.



MOST PLAYOFF MISSES

TEAM	PLAYOFF MISSES	CUP PENALTY	TOTAL
Toronto Maple Leafs	20		20
Florida Panthers	17		17
Vancouver Canucks	17		17
Arizona Coyotes	16		16
Buffalo Sabres	15		15
Washington Capitals	15		15
Winnipeg Jets	13		13
Columbus Blue Jackets	12		12
Minnesota Wild	8		8
Nashville Predators	8		8
St. Louis Blues	8		8
Ottawa Senators	7		7
San Jose Sharks	6		6
Calgary Flames	15	-25	-10
Philadelphia Flyers	10	-20	-10
Dallas Stars	17	-50	-33
New York Rangers	12	-50	-38
Carolina Hurricanes	22	-100	-78
New York Islanders	19	-100	-81
Tampa Bay Lightning	14	-100	-86
Anaheim Ducks	10	-100	-90
Montreal Canadiens	8	-140	-132
Edmonton Oilers	15	-150	-135
Colorado Avalanche	13	-150	-137
New Jersey Devils	18	-250	-232
Pittsburgh Penguins	17	-300	-283
Detroit Red Wings	16	-300	-284
Boston Bruins	6	-500	-494
Los Angeles Kings	19	-1000	-981
Chicago Blackhawks	10	-1500	-1490



SHARK WEAK

San Jose fans have enjoyed playoff hockey often since the team's 1991-92 berth but never a Stanley Cup final.

BLACK MARKS

The Canucks have lost two Game 7s in Stanley Cup finals. Rioting ensued after crushing defeats in 1994 and 2011.

GAME 7s

Some teams remember specific Game 7s as days of infamy. The Flames, Oilers and Canucks have each been within a victory of a title this millennium. The Leafs lament Kerry Fraser's missed call when Wayne Gretzky high-sticked Doug Gilmour in 1993 and shudder at the collapse against Boston in 2013. The Washington Capitals are just plain bad in Game 7s through their franchise history.

We didn't want to weight every category for time, so this one skews more toward success, or lack thereof. For all the pain Toronto fans have endured, the Leafs are a respectable 7-8 in Game 7s since 1967-68. Any team that reaches a Game 7 with the Ottawa Senators or Arizona Coyotes, however, has the victory all but locked up, as neither team has ever won a Game 7. Those poor Caps have triumphed in just four of 14 Game 7s. It seems they'll never get that elusive Cup until they can deliver in the clutch.

WORST GAME 7 RECORD

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES	WIN PCT.
Arizona Coyotes	0	5	0.000
Ottawa Senators	0	5	0.000
Buffalo Sabres	1	6	0.143
Anaheim Ducks	2	7	0.222
WSH. Capitals	4	10	0.286
Calgary Flames	4	8	0.333
Dallas Stars	2	4	0.333
San Jose Sharks	3	5	0.375
New York Islanders	2	3	0.400
St. Louis Blues	6	9	0.400
Colorado Avalanche	5	7	0.417
Chicago Blackhawks	3	4	0.429
Toronto Maple Leafs	7	8	0.467
Florida Panthers	1	1	0.500
New Jersey Devils	4	4	0.500
New York Rangers	2	2	0.500
PIT. Penguins	7	7	0.500
Boston Bruins	10	9	0.526
Detroit Red Wings	7	6	0.538
Philadelphia Flyers	10	7	0.588
Edmonton Oilers	5	3	0.625
Los Angeles Kings	7	4	0.636
Vancouver Canucks	7	4	0.636
Montreal Canadiens	11	5	0.688
Carolina Hurricanes	4	1	0.800
T.B. Lightning	5	1	0.833
Minnesota Wild	3	0	1.000
CLB. Blue Jackets	0	0	N/A
Nashville Predators	0	0	N/A
Winnipeg Jets	0	0	N/A

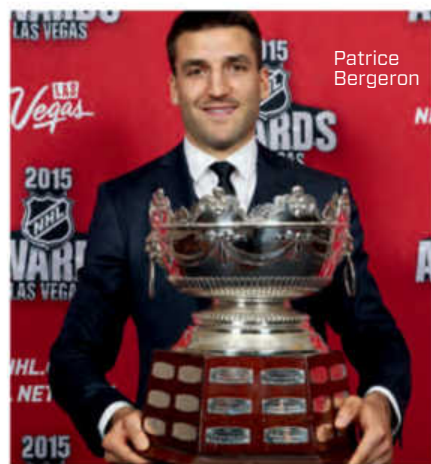
AWARDS



Think of individual hardware as consolation prizes. Even if your team can't win the Stanley Cup, there's a satisfaction in having talented players to watch every game and a vindication when those players are recognized with major awards. The Predators are the only current team in the NHL never to have won a Hart, Vezina, Norris, Conn Smythe, Selke, Art Ross, Jack Adams, Calder or Rocket Richard. They've only had 16 seasons to try, of course. What's the Leafs' excuse? Since 1967-68, a span of 47 seasons, Toronto

has two awards to show for it. Gilmour took the Selke as best defensive forward and Pat Burns the Adams as coach of the year in 1992-93.

To put the Leafs' futility in perspective, 10 other franchises remain from the 1967-68 expansion year, and each has won at least nine NHL awards. The Bruins lead the way with 50. Bobby Orr and Phil Esposito did a lot of that damage, but stars like Ray Bourque, Patrice Bergeron, Tim Thomas, Zdeno Chara and Tuukka Rask have followed.



FEWEST AWARDS

TEAM	Vezina	Hart	Norris	Conn Smythe	Selke	Art Ross	Jack Adams	Calder	Richard	Total	Seasons	Awards/Season
Nashville Predators										0	16	0.00
Toronto Maple Leafs					1		1			2	47	0.04
Minnesota Wild							1			1	14	0.07
Winnipeg Jets								1	1	2	15	0.13
Carolina Hurricanes				1	2			1	1	5	35	0.14
Dallas Stars				1	3	1		2		7	47	0.15
San Jose Sharks		1				1		1	1	4	23	0.17
Vancouver Canucks		1			1	2	2	1	1	8	44	0.18
Florida Panthers								2	2	4	21	0.19
New York Rangers	3	1	2	1				2		9	47	0.19
Columbus Blue Jackets	1							1	1	3	14	0.21
Ottawa Senators			2				2	1		5	22	0.23
Arizona Coyotes							4	2	2	8	35	0.23
Los Angeles Kings		1	1	2		4	1	1	1	11	47	0.23
Calgary Flames				1		1	1	5	2	10	42	0.24
New Jersey Devils	4		1	2	1		1	2		11	40	0.28
Anaheim Ducks		1		2					3	6	21	0.29
St. Louis Blues	1	2	2	1	1		4	1	3	15	47	0.32
Tampa Bay Lightning		1		1		2	1		3	8	22	0.36
Colorado Avalanche		2		2		1	2	5	1	13	35	0.37
Philadelphia Flyers	4	4		4	2		4		1	19	47	0.40
New York Islanders	1	1	3	4	1	1	1	4	2	18	42	0.43
Buffalo Sabres	9	2			2		2	3	2	20	44	0.45
Washington Capitals	2	3	2		1	1	2	1	7	19	40	0.48
Detroit Red Wings		1	8	4	7		4			24	47	0.51
Chicago Blackhawks	5	1	5	3	3	1	1	4	2	25	47	0.53
Pittsburgh Penguins		7	1	3	1	15	1	2	4	34	47	0.72
Edmonton Oilers	1	9	2	4		7	1		6	30	35	0.86
Montreal Canadiens	12	4	4	8	7	3	2	1	2	43	47	0.91
Boston Bruins	4	5	14	3	4	7	3	4	6	50	47	1.06



OVERTIMES

There's something elemental about losing a playoff heartbreaker in overtime, especially if the opposing team's goal is a season-ender. Which franchise's fans have crumbled to their respective living room floors crying most often per overtime contest? We ranked each franchise based on its overtime success rate. Doing it by volume would've skewed the results, putting a team like Montreal, which is a highly successful 53-38 in extra time since 1967-68, too high because of the number of losses. Win percentage was our criterion here.

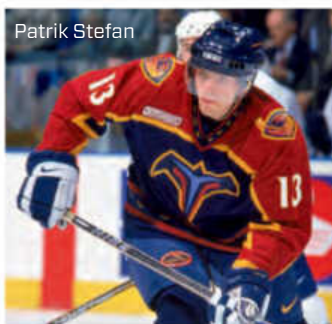
WORST OVERTIME RECORD

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES	Win pct.
Columbus Blue Jackets	0	2	0.000
Winnipeg Jets	0	1	0.000
Florida Panthers	2	5	0.286
Arizona Coyotes	8	12	0.400
Detroit Red Wings	24	35	0.407
Calgary Flames	18	25	0.419
Boston Bruins	36	48	0.429
Edmonton Oilers	18	24	0.429
New York Islanders	7	9	0.438
San Jose Sharks	17	20	0.459
Vancouver Canucks	26	28	0.481
St. Louis Blues	29	31	0.483
Philadelphia Flyers	35	37	0.486
Los Angeles Kings	28	27	0.509
Pittsburgh Penguins	24	23	0.511
Minnesota Wild	8	7	0.533
Ottawa Senators	16	14	0.533
Toronto Maple Leafs	30	26	0.536
Buffalo Sabres	32	27	0.542
Washington Capitals	28	23	0.549
Chicago Blackhawks	43	33	0.566
Dallas Stars	30	23	0.566
Anaheim Ducks	22	16	0.579
Colorado Avalanche	40	29	0.580
Montreal Canadiens	53	38	0.582
New York Rangers	36	25	0.590
Tampa Bay Lightning	11	7	0.611
New Jersey Devils	27	17	0.614
Carolina Hurricanes	21	13	0.618
Nashville Predators	7	2	0.778



SABRE THROUGH THE HEART

It's painful enough to lose in the Stanley Cup final. But imagine the agony of doing so on home ice...in overtime...on a goal that appeared to be illegal? Buffalo Sabres fans revile the name Brett Hull. He won the Stanley Cup for Dallas in 1999 by scoring with his foot in the crease. It was later clarified the NHL had amended its rule to allow a skate in the crease if a player was in control of the puck. Sorry, Buffalo.



DRAFT BUSTS

Another way to scar fans: draft the player everyone expects to save the franchise, then watch him flounder. We looked at every player picked in the top five of the NHL draft from 1967 to 2005. Skaters who failed to reach 500 games and goalies who didn't play 400 qualified as busts. We factored in the number of busts and the percentage of picks who went bust, ranking teams in each metric and combining them for an aggregate score.

The Minnesota North Stars/Dallas Stars were the surprising "winners," with six of their 10 top-five picks going bust. They aced it with Mike Modano first overall in 1988 but blew it with first-overall pick Brian Lawton in 1983 and Richard Jackman at No. 5 in 1996, among others.

No other team had more than three busts, and the Calgary Flames are the lone active franchise never to pick in the top five.



BONUS CATEGORY: CONTROVERSIES

Numbers can't capture every aspect of nightmarish fandom. We needed one subjective category encapsulating the intangibles, the moments of infamy, the scandals, the embarrassments. We awarded five star-crossed teams a "sympathy bonus" based on our emotional feelings toward their fan bases.

We factored in as many miserable moments as we could think of. The Oilers losing Wayne Gretzky via heartbreaking trade in the summer of 1988 counted. Bryan Berard's horrific eye injury as a Leaf in 2000 counted. The Philadelphia Flyers' tragic loss of goalie Pelle Lindbergh in a 1985 car accident months after he won the Vezina Trophy.

Our top sympathy bonus went to the Canucks. If you're a fan of the team, not only have you not seen a Cup parade over 44 seasons, you've endured TWO defeats in Game 7 of the Cup final, in 1994 and 2011, and TWO ensuing riots that damaged the city's reputation. Canucks fans also witnessed one of their superstars, Todd Bertuzzi, commit arguably the grisliest on-ice assault in NHL history on Steve Moore in 2004. Bertuzzi fractured Moore's vertebrae, ending Moore's career, and earned a 20-game suspension. Canucks enforcer Donald Brashear was on the receiving end of an equally savage attack, a stick swing to the head from the Bruins' Marty McSorley, in 2000. Vancouver fans haven't just struggled with a losing team. They've had their hearts broken on a Shakespearean scale.

The Buffalo Sabres have endured a lot, too. Defenseman Tim Horton perished in a 1974 car accident, and goaltender Clint Malarchuk almost lost his life horrifically in a 1989 game when an errant skate slashed his throat. Another type of slight we tracked for fans was how often their teams lost players or coaches within a year of them winning major awards. Sabres fans saw coach Ted Nolan essentially get fired during a contract dispute months after winning the Jack Adams in 1997. They watched Dominik Hasek win the 2000-01 Vezina, then get traded to Detroit, where he won a Cup the next season. And did we mention the 1999 final? Yeah, another sore spot for Sabres fans, as the Dallas Stars' Brett Hull ended the series with an overtime winner despite having a foot in the crease, which many furious Buffalo fans were certain was illegal at the time.

The New York Islanders (Mike Milbury years, Rick DiPietro, Fishstick jerseys, Alexei Yashin contract), Toronto Maple Leafs (Harold Ballard years, playoff chokes, 1967 Cup drought) and new Winnipeg Jets (Dany Heatley/Dan Snyder car accident, Patrik Stefan, leaving Atlanta) also earned sympathy bonuses for their beaten-down fan bases.



FAN SUFFERING INDEX RESULTS

TEAM	TICKET	PLAYOFFS	AWARDS	BUSTS	GAME 7S	OVERTIMES	SYMPATHY BONUS	TOTAL SCORE
Vancouver Canucks	3	2	8	22	21	11	-30	37
Winnipeg Jets	4	7	4	13	15.5	1	-5	39.5
Toronto Maple Leafs	1	1	2	23	12	18	-5	52
Columbus Blue Jackets	22	8	11	9	15.5	1		66.5
San Jose Sharks	17	13	7	14	6	10		67
St. Louis Blues	18	9	18	3	8	12		68
Arizona Coyotes	27	4	13	23	1	4		72
Buffalo Sabres	23	5	23	20	3	19	-20	73
Minnesota Wild	12	9	3	7	27	16		74
Washington Capitals	11	5	24	11	4	20		75
Calgary Flames	14	14	15	23	5	6		77
Dallas Stars	29	16	6	1	5	22		79
Florida Panthers	30	2	9	23	13	3		80
Ottawa Senators	19	12	12	23	1	16		83
Boston Bruins	2	28	30	2	17	7		86
New York Islanders	20	19	22	18	8	9	-10	86
Philadelphia Flyers	7	14	21	14	19	13		88
Edmonton Oilers	10	23	28	4	20	7		92
Nashville Predators	15	9	1	23	15.5	30		93.5
New York Rangers	6	17	10	23	13	26		95
Pittsburgh Penguins	9	26	27	6	13	15		96
Los Angeles Kings	13	29	14	7	21	14		98
Chicago Blackhawks	5	30	26	9	11	21		102
Montreal Canadiens	8	22	29	4	23	25		111
Carolina Hurricanes	16	18	5	23	24	29		115
Colorado Avalanche	25	24	20	14	10	24		117
Detroit Red Wings	21	27	25	21	18	5		117
New Jersey Devils	24	25	16	11	13	28		117
Anaheim Ducks	26	21	17	19	26	23		132
Tampa Bay Lightning	28	20	19	14	25	27		133



Electric

Youth

TAMPA'S TERRIFIC TRIO LOOKS TO CATCH LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE AGAIN AFTER SHOCKING THE LEAGUE A SEASON AGO



BY **KEN CAMPBELL**



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BRIAN BLANCO**

THEY CELEBRATED their first birthday in late October, the 24th to be exact. But there was no cake. Knowing these guys, they would have just kept passing the pieces to each other and nobody would have had any. But it's an event worth celebrating. It's not often in today's NHL you get a line that lasts that long. It's not often today you get a line that lasts more than a couple games. The Production Line (Lindsay-Abel-Howe), the Punch Line (Blake-Lach-Richard), the French Connection (Martin-Perreault-Robert), the GAG Line (Hadfield-Ratelle-Gilbert), the Kraut Line (Dumart-Schmidt-Bauer) – all those guys have gone on to that great pond hockey game in the sky or are collecting social security checks.

They played at a time when “men were men” and you could drill a guy's bare head into the glass without fear of reprisal. Nope, they don't make lines like that anymore. That is, they didn't until early last season when Tampa Bay Lightning coach Jon Cooper looked down his bench in Winnipeg and realized he only had 10 forwards. The Jets had been throwing their weight around, and before the end of the first period, J.T. Brown had

taken a hit from Chris Thorburn and Brett Connolly had been rubbed out by Andrew Ladd. Neither right winger was available for the rest of the game, so Cooper had to get creative. In a move that was hockey's equivalent to Wally Pipp being replaced by Lou Gehrig, Cooper put the left-shooting Nikita Kucherov in Connolly's spot on a line centered by Tyler Johnson and left-flanked by Ondrej Palat.

The record will show the Triplets were born at 17-feet, seven inches and 551 pounds, between the 17:53 and 18:02 marks of the second period that night in Winnipeg, the result of a screwed up icing call that placed the faceoff at center ice. Johnson cleanly wins the draw on the backhand over Adam Lowry of the Jets. Lightning defenseman Anton Stralman, with Winnipeg's T.J. Galiardi in hot pursuit, goes back to his zone to retrieve it and quickly fires the puck off the boards out of his zone.

Then the magic happens.

Kucherov, who is in a perfect support position, executes a no-look tip between his legs with his back to the play, which immediately catches Jets defenseman Tobias Enstrom pinching in the middle of the ice and makes him the star of the Jets video the next day entitled, *About Last Night: The Anatomy of a Whuppin'*. The puck lands on Johnson's

stick at the red line, and he enters the zone with all kinds of speed, with only Jets defenseman Zach Bogosian between him and the goal. The right-shot Johnson feathers a saucer pass on his forehand to Palat, who snaps it past Jets goalie Ondrej Pavelec for a 4-1 lead in what would become a 4-2 victory for the Lightning. “It was an injury thing, so I can't sit here and say, ‘Oh, I had this unbelievable foresight that these guys were going to work together,’” Cooper said, “but I was smart enough to keep them together.”

It was almost as though from that moment, Palat, Johnson and Kucherov have had some sort of uncanny kinship that gives them a sense of where each other is on the ice at all times. How else do you explain Kucherov tipping it between his legs to Johnson? It's a scene that played itself over and over again last season and has continued into this one. There was no better line in hockey last season to the eyeballs of the seasoned hockey pundits, or among the analytics crowd, than the Triplets. No line scored as many goals or had more of an impact, and no unit embedded itself into the consciousness of hockey fans the way this one did. In an era when twosomes seem to be all the rage, with a third interloper moving in and out of the mix, the Triplets have

found a comfort zone and level of success that has them solidly on the lineup board for the Lightning and their opponents, usually as the second unit behind Steven Stamkos and whoever it is that he's playing with these days. "In Kuch's rookie year, he didn't play with us, and I spoke maybe two words to him that year," Johnson said. "It's been fun to get to know him. I love playing with him, and I love having him around."

All three lived in the same condo complex last season before Palat went out and bought himself a house. But Palat settling down is not a case of "Jimmy quit, Jody got married," for the three. They still hang out off the ice, usually going for sushi at Kucherov's suggestion. "They're all unreal friends, so it's not like they come to the rink and then all take off away from each other," Cooper said. "They're together, which is a little odd sometimes because we have some Russians and they seem to hang out together, but Kuch, they're all pretty close and they all kind of hang out together."

Johnson and Palat have had a comfort level that goes back to their days in the minors, where they also played for Cooper and had a ton of success. In fact, this season marks the fifth straight that Palat and Johnson have been linemates. That they have meshed with Kucherov, who plays his off-wing and the role of the strong, silent type of the group, is a testament to the unselfish nature of both their games. "Our lines are changing all the time except for us," Johnson said. "It's kind of weird. I even noticed it in camp this year: 'Pally' and I were together for a couple of (pre-season) games, and Kuch wasn't there and it felt weird. I remember having lines in the past, and you don't feel that weirdness, but for some reason it's just kind of different not having both of them."

Those who can hearken to the late 1980s might remember a movie called *Twins*. It starred Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito as Julius and Vincent Benedict, who, unaware of each other's existence, discover as adults that they were the result of a secret experiment conducted at a genetics factory and that they're biological twins. It was goofy and campy enough to make \$216 million at the worldwide box office and make Schwarzenegger and DeVito very rich, or very richer, since they negotiated a deal to receive 20 percent of the box office revenue.

Almost 30 years later, there's actually a script for a sequel in which the Benedict brothers find out there was another sibling that was created during the experiment, a third brother played by Eddie Murphy. Heh-heh. It sounds like a disaster: Universal Studios is apparently holding onto the script,



uncertain about its future, and we can only hope it decides to never embark on making *Triplets*, because, seriously, who would ever believe in such a ridiculous concept?

Seriously, who would think three guys – one from Frydek-Mistek, Czech Republic, another from Moscow, Russia and a third from Spokane, Wash., – could form a trio so in tune with one another's on-ice rhythms and habits that they could become one of the most dominant lines in hockey? After all, by all conventional thinking, two of them shouldn't even be in the league. Did we mention John-

son is 5-foot-8 and he's from Spokane? Not exactly a hockey factory, but you don't have to be from a hockey factory if you're willing to make the commute he and his parents did when he was playing minor hockey.

Johnson is actually from Liberty Lake, a small suburb of Spokane. His mother, Debbie, was a skating instructor and his father, Ken, a hockey coach. After seeing their son outgrow the local competition – in the metaphorical sense only – the Johnsons would spend most summer weekends making the seven-hour trip to Vancouver for summer hockey. The



“

WE ALL HAD
TO BATTLE
SOMETHING AT
SOME POINT
TO GET HERE

– Tyler Johnson



JHL, and even then it was with the fourth-last pick of that draft, in the seventh round at 208th overall.

Kucherov is the outlier of the group, going in the second round of the 2011 draft to the Lightning, but his journey to the NHL wasn't without its own obstacles. He came to play for the Quebec Remparts in 2012-13, which just happened to be a lockout year, which meant the Remparts had to make room for Mikhail Grigorenko and their two other import players. Kucherov found himself in and out of the lineup along with Nick Sorensen and, despite scoring three goals and 10 points in six games after coming off shoulder surgery, was a frequent visitor to coach Patrick Roy's doghouse. It was only after he was dealt to the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies that Kucherov flourished, tallying 26 goals and 53 points in 27 regular season games before adding nine goals and 24 points in the playoffs. "We all had to battle something at some point," Johnson said. "I mean, Pally

local junior team, the WHL's Spokane Chiefs, waited until the 11th round to draft him. He went on to score 128 goals and 282 points in four seasons, helping the Chiefs win the Memorial Cup in 2008 and the U.S. win World Junior Championship gold in 2010.

Johnson was never drafted but went as an invite to the Phoenix Coyotes' camp in 2008 and the Minnesota Wild's in 2009 and 2010. Imagine that. Sounds a little like the story of Martin St-Louis. As was the case with St-Louis, the Lightning saw something in Johnson nobody else did and decided to of-

THREE'S COMPANY

Palat, Johnson and Kucherov carry their bond off the ice, constantly socializing together.

fer him a contract to play on their AHL team.

Palat's journey to the NHL wasn't quite as circuitous, but neither did he get drafted in his first year of eligibility. Coming over to North America at 18, Palat was taken as a 19-year-old after a 96-point season with the Drummondville Voltigeurs of the QM-



“

WE ALL PLAY THE SAME. YOU CAN MAKE THE BLIND PASS. YOU TRUST HIM AND HE TRUSTS YOU – Nikita Kucherov

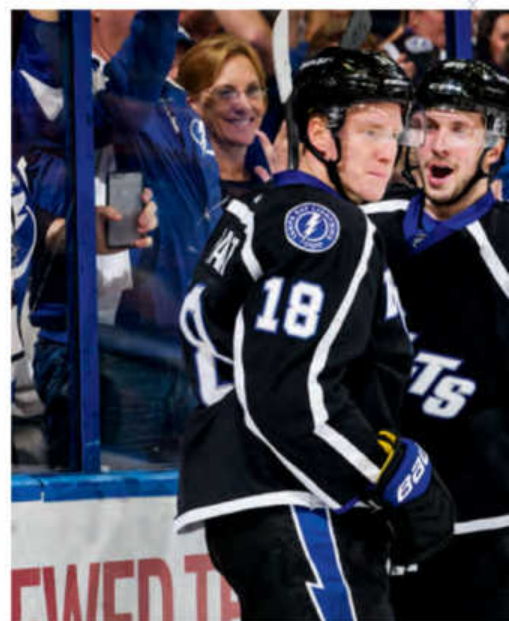
was a seventh-rounder. Kuch was a second-rounder, but if you look at his draft report, a lot of people said he was lazy and stuff, but I’ve never seen that from him. I’m sure he slipped off other people’s radars, but people couldn’t have been more wrong about him.”

Last season, the Triplets played 668 minutes of 5-on-5 hockey together, and they made the most of their time. Johnson averaged almost 2.97 points 5-on-5 per 60 minutes to lead the league. Palat was second in that category at 2.92 and Kucherov was seventh at 2.64. As a team, the Lightning scored 4.31 goals per 60 minutes when the Triplets were on the ice together and just 2.21 when they weren’t. As a line, they scored 48 goals together last season and allowed 23, meaning they basically scored two goals for every one they allowed. That’s how much this

team relied on them last season.

For the three players, it’s simply a matter of trust. It’s something that has always existed between Palat and Johnson and was built with Kucherov. Remember that blind between-the-legs pass Kucherov made on one of his first shifts, with Johnson and Palat? Well, that kind of pass can turn out disastrously if Johnson’s not there to pick it up and use his speed to gain the zone. It’s the kind of pass that can get a player nailed to the bench if it goes sideways. Perhaps that was the one that set the tone for the group. Kucherov made the pass, Johnson was there and everything turned out honky-dory. “We all play the same way,” Kucherov said. “We know where everybody is. You don’t even have to look for the pass. You just know where it is. You can just make the blind pass. You trust him and he trusts you.”

That trust engenders a pack mentality with the three of them. There have been



times when they’ve had to stick up for each other on the ice, even though not one of them would be seen as much of a tough customer. None has ever been assessed a fighting major during his career, but there have been some close calls. Last season, about a month after the trio had been united, Rick Nash of the New York Rangers took a high-sticking penalty against Palat, and Johnson jumped in to help, which earned Nash an-

1+1=3?

The Triplets' nickname was inspired by their coach's daughters, who are twins.

other minor. Not only did the Lightning get a 5-on-3 advantage, on which they scored, they got the better of the exchange, at least as far as they remember it. "Nash ended up on his ass, I think," Palat said.

There's an unstated level of accountability with the three, but there's also a bit of fun. For example, Johnson has learned all the Russian swear words Palat and Kucherov already knew. Johnson is particularly hard on himself when he makes a mistake, and when he comes back to the bench cursing to himself, he can often see in the corner of his eye Palat and Kucherov sharing a chuckle about it. And it didn't take long for that to develop. It was Cooper who came up with the nickname for the line from watching his twin daughters, Julia and Josephine, interact at home. His girls finish each other's sentences and seem to share a wavelength that is not privy to anyone else. When he was talking about the line after one game, that came to his mind. He called them the Triplets, and the name has stuck.



er's games. "All of a sudden, you're looking at the game from their perspective and it's remarkable," Cooper said. "They just talk it out among themselves, and they just look at me and say, 'OK, are we good?' And I'm like, 'Yeah, we're good.'"

HAPPY ACCIDENT

The Triplets were only ever put together on a line because of a Lightning injury emergency.



The early part of this season hasn't gone as well for the Triplets. After nine games, Johnson had yet to score a goal, and none of the three was among the NHL's top 100 scorers. Palat and Kucherov had two goals each. Part of the reason for that is, like the Lightning, the Triplets aren't creeping up on anyone this season. Last year in the Stanley Cup final, they saw a steady diet of Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook and, combined with the broken wrist through which Johnson was playing, the line's effectiveness was limited.

Perhaps that's to be expected. The Triplets had an 11.6 shooting percentage as a group, a figure considerably lower this season. And they've noticed now they're facing far more difficult matchups. Cooper said in the first game of the season, Johnson and Palat had a 2-on-1 in which the defenseman gambled and played the pass to Palat, which basically gave Johnson a breakaway. Instead of shooting, Johnson elected to pass. "I was like, 'OK, we understand you're buddies, but let's be a little selfish here, too,'" Cooper said. "That was something where 'Johnny' would have shot for sure (last season). He wouldn't even have thought about it."

Will the Triplets lead the league in points again this season? It seems unlikely, unless they recapture the magic of 2014-15. Already, Cooper has had to pull them aside to quell their frustration, telling them to look

at their entire body of work and that there will be nights when perhaps they're not the best trio on the ice.

They continue to go for sushi. Johnson continues to be bewildered at Palat's affinity for electronic dance music, which seems to be blasting from every electronic device Palat owns. They'll all still have chicken, pasta, broccoli and salad as their pre-game meal and on the road go out for steak dinners. What came to them so easily last season will take more effort in 2015-16. As Cooper said, "Now, the journey is going to be different."

As the three of them sit in the lobby of a Buffalo hotel early in the season, Palat knocks on the table, saying he hopes all three can stay healthy and productive. What he doesn't realize is he's knocking on a porcelain surface. "It's supposed to be wood," Johnson said.

Not exactly finishing the guy's sentence, but you get the idea. They don't know each other's favorite movies, but they do know exactly where the other two are going to be on the ice. And who knows? There may come a day when the Triplets will have to be split up. The Lightning have had a pretty impressive run of good health among their forwards since last season, and an injury can change everything. So can a sustained bout of sub-par play. Which will make things weird for a while for the Triplets and cause the coach no end of consternation. "I hope that doesn't come," Cooper said, "because that probably means things have gone south." **TNN**



MUS'

10

Hockey isn't just a game. It's a culture. It can affect our clothing, our diet, even our taste in music (hello out there, Stompin' Tom). Cheering on the local squad is part of the experience, but there's a whole world of hockey out there. These rites of passage should top any diehard's checklist

WEAR YOUR COLORS
IN ENEMY TERRITORY

HOW DEEP IS YOUR FANDOM? Anybody can wear a jersey to a game, but it takes guts to wear your colors on the road. Rachel Gardner is a Flyers fan from the suburbs of Philadelphia, and she's worn the Orange and Black to several different arenas, including archrival Pittsburgh's.

In 2011-12, wearing a Max Talbot Flyers jersey, she watched coach Peter Laviolette nearly get in a fight with Pens peer Dan Bylsma after a big hit on Daniel Briere, but she and her Philly compatriots also got to cheer for a lot of Flyers goals in a 6-3 win. "I'm quiet by nature," Gardner said. "But we were definitely out of our seats."

Gardner actually likes the Consol Energy Center, and nothing untoward happened in the stands despite her jersey. Her dad is a Sidney Crosby fan, and she says Pittsburgh's arena has cool photo ops (there's a huge goalie mask in one part of the concourse). There's nothing like taking part in a rivalry: "It's always the best hockey."

ALAN & RACHEL
GARDNER

BY RYAN KENNEDY

CHANT WITH
FANS IN EUROPE

TEDDO



TOUCH THE STANLEY CUP

SINCE 1988, PHIL PRITCHARD

has guarded the Stanley Cup and taken it around the world. Countless fans have waited in line for their moment with the chalice and there are rules.

Here's a checklist:

Now, if you're at a party with Jonathan Toews and he lets you hoist or drink from the Cup, then lucky you, Pritchard says. There are guidelines for players too, but they're less black and white. "What we usually tell the guys," Pritchard said, "is that as long as it's respectful, it's good to go."

Getting back to the fans, Pritchard's favorite part involves a superstition among some diehards: "A lot of fans won't touch it until their team wins it," he said. "They'll wait in line for two hours to see it, but won't touch it. That's cool to me. That's a true hockey fan."



1. HOIST IT OVER YOUR HEAD
- NO.



2. KISS THE CUP
- YES.



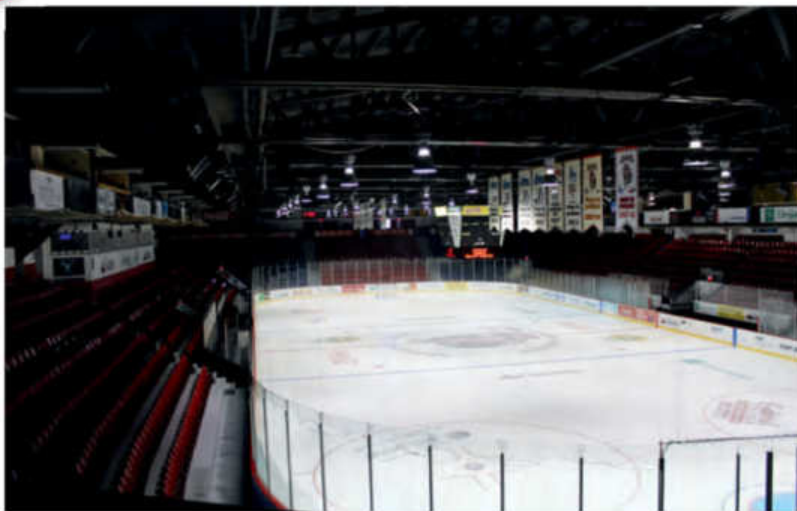
3. DRINK FROM THE CUP
- NO.



4. TAKE A SELFIE
- YES.

IN NHL ARENAS, DJs prompt fans to get loud. In Europe, the partisans are self-starters. Chants are popular. Ottawa's Bobby Ryan played for Mora in Sweden during the lockout and agrees taking in the European game experience is a must. "It was incredible. If you're up by one or down by two, it's the same chant. It lifted me up as a player."

Many of the chants are clever, such as Djurgarden's "Matte Alba har ingen nasa." It's the Swedish equivalent of "Potvin Sucks," referencing an incident 30 years ago when Djurgarden's Hakan Sodergren high-sticked rival AIK's Mats Alba so badly he broke Alba's nose. The translation of the chant? "Matte Alba doesn't have a nose."



VISIT AN OLD BARN

AS GREAT AS modern, state-of-the-art arenas can be, there's something to be said for the rinks that have hosted games for decades. And really, you need to do it fast: Moose Jaw has already lost the 'Crushed Can,' and the fate of Gatineau's Robert Guertin Arena seems to change every few months. The history and old-school feel of such places (Cornell's Lynah is another good one) can't be replicated.



VISIT THE HOCKEY HALL OF FAME

EVERY RELIGION HAS ITS PLACES of worship, and hockey's greatest shrine has a pretty nice setup. Though it is housed in an old bank in Toronto, the Hall of Fame feels like a church in some parts. All the major trophies are there, all the names of the inductees, too. The sweaters and memorabilia are to die for, but for curator Pritchard, his favorite section is the World of Hockey, where artifacts from the 75 or so countries that play the game are displayed. "It's Canada's gift to the world," he said.

WATCH A GAME FROM THE GLASS

WE DON'T ALL HAVE THE FUNDS to watch an NHL game from the front row, but if you ever get the chance to catch a high-level match from that vantage point, do so. Much like the folks who cowered from an on-screen locomotive when cinema first reached the masses, you will flinch when a puck dings off your pane of glass or two powerful athletes crunch up against it. It's visceral and very cool.



GETTY IMAGES

GRAB A DOG IN MONTREAL





HEAR THE CANNON IN COLUMBUS

LAST SEASON, THE HOCKEY MEDIA descended on Columbus for the NHL All-Star Game. The city showed well, but a few reporters left with jangled nerves thanks to the cannon that resides in Section 111. It's loud, for sure, but it's also a unique aspect of going to a game at Nationwide Arena. The cannon debuted in 2007 and was built to be a Civil War-era model. It fires every time the Blue Jackets take to the ice and after every home goal. And yes, you can have your picture taken with it.



HEAR THE VICTORY BELL AT LAKE SUPERIOR STATE

NCAA TEAMS HAVE some of the coolest traditions around, and Lake Superior State is at the top with the ringing of the victory bell. After every Lakers home win, fans rush to the Hoholik-Husband Victory Bell outside the nearby Norris Center, waiting for the players to run by, still wearing all their gear (except skates). Each player rings the bell, led by the game's hardest worker or top player. Other traditions at schools such as Michigan include chants of "It's all your fault!" when a visiting goalie gives up a goal and fans holding up newspapers out of mock boredom when the enemy lineup is announced.



MONTREAL IS A CITY KNOWN FOR its food, from smoked meat sandwiches to poutine and possibly some healthy stuff, but we're not sure on that last one. And leave it to Montreal to elevate the hot dog to must-have status. There's something about the steamers in the city that replicate that local rink vibe, where a hot dog was so good after your house league game. Local chains such as La Belle Province and Lafleur's are great, and grabbing a hot dog before, after or during a Habs game just seems right. If you prefer your pork pulled, head down to Carolina, where Hurricanes fans are known to barbecue some mean tailgating grub.



GO TO THE WORLD JUNIORS

THE WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP has become one of the biggest sporting events in Canada, bringing in huge TV ratings and an outsized amount of attention on a group of teenagers wearing the Red and White. But there's a reason the tournament is so popular: the New Year's Eve game is always against a huge rival (usually USA or Russia, though this year it's Sweden) and the medal round is a single-elimination nailbiter. But folks don't just watch on TV – they head over to Europe in droves when the tournament is there, too.

Organizers in Helsinki have reported strong ticket sales from Canadians for this year's tournament, while tour groups such as Destiny and Azorcan arrange tickets and itineraries for hundreds of Canucks who want some holiday hockey action.

Even when the showdown is in North America, the locals come together to support underdogs such as Denmark or they make it a border battle. The atmosphere in Buffalo when Team USA faced the Canadians back in 2011 was insane and could return if the city wins the rights to host again in 2018. **THE**



BRUCE BENNETT STUDIO/GETTY IMAGES, PUCK ICON ANTHONY HAMIL/THENOUNPROJECT



LAST GOAL HE SCORED

So what became of that puck made famous by Barilko when it won the Leafs the Cup?



HARRY'S PUCK

BY BRIAN COSTELLO

THINK FOR A MOMENT ABOUT THE PUCKS OUT THERE

that have mass appeal because of their exceptional time stamps on hockey history. There are the individual milestone ones – the Wayne Gretzky puck breaking Gordie Howe's scoring record, Mike Bossy's 50-in-50 puck, dozens more like that. But what about the pucks marking seminal moments in the game? Paul Henderson's winner from the 1972 Summit Series? Sidney Crosby's overtime goal that won the 2010 Olympic gold?

The Bill Barilko puck would have to be in that category as well, largely due to the mysterious disappearance of the Stanley Cup hero that same summer he scored his Cup-clinching goal. His body was eventually found 11 years later, but the mystery doesn't end there.

The famous puck that bore a hockey legend is in dispute.

Is it the one that's been on display in the Hockey Hall of Fame since it opened in 1961? Or has it been more humbly showcased on the Donohue family's mantel nearly 65 years after Barilko won the Maple Leafs Lord Stanley's mug?



The limousine showed up at the Wellington House on Cannon Street in Hamilton, Ont., at about 3:30 p.m. that cool, spring day April 21, 1951. Jeremiah Donohue patted the shoulder of his barkeep and told him not to wait up. "It's going to be a late night," he said with a wink. "A fun night."

"Hey, Jeremiah! You sure you don't want to take me with you?" a pickled patron belted across the tavern. "Doesn't Harry have homework? There's a nice radio in the corner he can listen to."

Just then, 16-year-old Harry, wearing a suit, came bounding down the stairs from his bedroom above the bar. "Let's go, Dad. Let's get there early. I want to see them warm up."

Jeremiah was passionate about hockey. The great-grandson of an Irish immigrant who settled in Hamilton, he had four season tickets to the Toronto Maple Leafs in the 1940s and '50s. Usually, he took one of his wife Jeannette, older son Jerry or younger son Harry to games, and Jeremiah always did so in a limo, since he didn't drive. The other two tickets were typically meant for friends, business associates, even lucky patrons who frequented the Wellington House.

On this Saturday, April 21, 1951, Harry was the lucky one up next in the Donohue family hockey queue. It just happened to be Game 5 of the Stanley Cup final between the Maple Leafs and the Montreal Canadiens, with Toronto holding a 3-1 series lead. "We just have to find a way to stop The Rocket," Harry said, tapping his dad's hat as the limo began its hour-long journey to Toronto. "He's scored in all four games so far. He's unstoppable!"

"But don't forget, Harry, we won three of those four games," Jeremiah reassured. "Yes, we needed overtime each game, but I'd settle for that one more time."

Harry always looked forward to a night out with his dad. Over the years, Harry and his brother had grown up to share their father with the community. Jeremiah was a fixture in Hamilton who loved to glad-hand and exchange stories. In a few short hours, he was about to witness a scene that would become Wellington House lore for decades.

As the limo pulled up to Maple Leaf Gardens, Harry was a bundle of nerves and barely had anything to eat at dinner. Sitting in the Red section, 10 rows up from the blueline, father and son joined 14,575 others in attendance to watch a scoreless first period. When Maurice Richard opened the scoring for the Habs at 8:56 of the second period, Harry glared over at his dad and said, "See?"



BARILKO PASSING PLAY

Barilko's Stanley Cup-winning goal in 1951 was witnessed by Hamilton tavern owner Jeremiah Donohue, top, and his son Harry, middle. It has since passed down another generation to Dan Donohue. Its next stop is the Hockey Hall of Fame, where it will sit among a collection of Barilko memorabilia.

With Montreal nursing a 2-1 lead in the final 90 seconds of the third, Toronto coach Joe Primeau pulled goalie Al Rollins. It was down to the last 40 seconds when Canadiens coach Dick Irvin sent out his best players to lock down the match and force a Game 6 back in Montreal. It was Richard, Doug Harvey, Elmer Lach, Bert Olmstead and Butch Bouchard. In Montreal's net was

When the Habs skated over to congratulate the winners, Harry grabbed his father's arm and leaned toward his ear. "Can I go down and get that puck in Montreal's net?"

Gerry McNeil, the story of the game so far.

Toronto star Ted Kennedy won the draw back to Max Bentley, who passed the puck to Sid Smith. A shot rang off the Montreal post, and the puck was scooped up by Tod Sloan, who scored the equalizer with 32 seconds left. Fans showered papers and programs on the ice and the band started playing. Jeremiah looked at his son and said, "See?"

Harry was jumping up and down as rink personnel cleared the debris. During the 10-minute intermission before overtime, Harry couldn't hear a thing in the corridors of the Gardens, just gibberish. All he could see through the cigarette smoke were fans whacking each other on the back.

The Leafs pressed from the first second of the extra period. In the third minute of overtime, Howie Meeker worked the puck over the blueline and took a shot that McNeil kicked aside. A rolling puck was collected by Toronto defenseman Harry Watson. He passed it to Meeker, who rounded the Montreal net and fed it in front. 'Bashin' Bill Barilko came rushing in from the point and delivered a diving, head-first backhand shot that landed high in the net over McNeil to win the game and the Cup for Toronto.

A legend was born.

The walls of the Gardens seemed to vibrate with noise around Harry as he watched the mayhem on the ice. Toronto players left the bench and swarmed Barilko, then drifted to center ice to mob Rollins, the winning goalie. Montreal players stood in disbelief. Their season was over. When they skated over to congratulate the winners, Harry grabbed his father's arm and leaned towards his ear. "Can I go down and get that puck in the Montreal net?"

Jeremiah looked to the ice, then back at Harry. "Yes, but ask that usher first."

Harry weaved his way down the steps to the side of the boards, asked the attendant about the puck and pointed toward it. The usher nodded. Harry hopped over the boards, shuffled toward the empty Canadiens net and fished the puck out, holding it with both hands as he made his way back to his seat. "I'll give you 20 bucks for that puck, young man," said a fan in the first row as Harry swung his legs over the boards. But the boy wouldn't oblige.

"Nice souvenir you have, son," Jeremiah said upon his return. "The overtime goal that won the Stanley Cup. I'm going to get that mounted for you, Harry."

On Monday morning, Jeremiah called a craftsman in Toronto who could build a wooden mount with a plaque that would display the winning Barilko puck. A week later, the family had it on their fireplace mantle where they lived above the Wellington House.



Little did the Donohue family know how the Barilko legend would grow and grow all these decades later. Four months after scoring that Cup-winning goal, Barilko and a friend flew to northern Ontario for a fishing trip and were never seen again. Despite an expansive air search, their remains weren't found for another 11 years. The Maple Leafs, who had won four Stanley Cups in a five-year window, ending with the Barilko goal in 1951, didn't win another until 1962, the year he was discovered.

If you read that above sentence in shrilly, rhythmic verse, that's because The Tragically Hip song *Fifty Mission Cap* is part of Barilko's growing legend. The 1992 song is not the only thing Barilko-related that has resurfaced in the past generation or so. "The Hall of Fame still gets Barilko artifacts coming in," said Phil Pritchard, the HHOF's curator. "Just recently, a lady living up near where Barilko went fishing came to us with his fishing rod. She was a little girl in 1951 when Barilko gave it to her because the plane was so full of fish."

Also part of the Barilko display at the Hall are the flight papers from his last journey that ended with the crash, the OPP report, and the reward letter; not to mention his game-worn jersey and game-used stick.

Back in Hamilton, Harry and Jeremiah would occasionally bring the puck sitting on its stand into the tavern and show it to appreciative customers, who would flip it in the air the way it flipped over McNeil's blocker 2:53 into overtime. They'd study the crest on it, maybe even kiss it.

As Harry got older and was married,

the Barilko puck would travel with him from one house to the next, always finding a prominent spot on the mantel. First, his oldest son, Dan, would play with it as a little boy, then Brian, then Chris, then Harry J. All four sons were aware it was Dad's special puck, but they didn't realize to what degree. "When Dad died (in 2013, at age 78)," his son Dan said, "my brothers thought the best way we could honor him and his memory was to loan the Barilko puck to the Hall of Fame so other fans could see it as well. Kind of like he and his father sharing it with hockey fans at the Wellington House."

That's where this story hits a bump in the road.



In preparing to pass along that special puck to the Hall of Fame in 2013, the Donohue family was stopped in its tracks by a stunning revelation:

The Hockey Hall of Fame already has the Barilko Cup-winning puck.

When Dan found that out, his nephew Nicholas Roberto did some digging and put together a research paper on NHL puck usage. He discovered the Hall of Fame's designated Barilko puck was made by Spalding and used in the NHL from 1920 to 1942. On

Dan said. "But the sports librarian said the camera pans away from the Montreal net and follows the Toronto players."

Dan's next stop is the national archives, to see if any still images of the game exist.

For now, and probably for eternity, there's no irrefutable evidence Harry's Barilko puck is the real deal. Could be it was just a puck shot into the stands during the warmup that day or earlier in the game and what happened afterward just fiction from the creative mind of a 16-year-old. "My rebuttal to that is, 'You don't know my father, and perhaps more importantly, my grandfather,'" Dan said. "My grandfather was a well-respected man in a lot of circles, and honesty meant everything to him. He wouldn't have created a plaque and had that puck mounted had he not seen with his own eyes his son go on the ice and get it."

(In the interest of full disclosure, I've known Dan for more than 20 years. We married into the same extended family. I knew his father, Harry, for the last decade of his life and can attest he was a man of honor and integrity.)

The Hall of Fame is caught in a tough situation. It already has one Barilko puck on display. What's it supposed to do? Decommission it on the word of a stranger all these decades after that special goal? "I hear Dan's story and I have absolutely no reason

My grandfather was a well-respected man, and honesty meant everything to him. He wouldn't have created a plaque and had that puck mounted had he not seen with his own eyes his son go on the ice and get it - Dan Donohue


the other hand, the crest on Harry's Barilko puck matches the ones used in the NHL from 1950 to 1958. The goal was scored in 1951. Is it possible the Hall has had an impostor puck all these decades?

The mystery only gets cloudier here. The Hall had been accumulating material in the 1940s and '50s before the exhibit officially opened in 1961, and the Barilko puck has been on display since then. But that was long before Pritchard's time as curator, which goes back 27 years, and he's been unable to track down the original source of the Hall's Barilko puck.

Dan also contacted CBC Archives to examine video footage of the Barilko goal, in the event he could track what happened to the puck after it eluded McNeil. "Wouldn't it have been neat if in the background of celebrations, there was footage of my dad hopping the boards and grabbing that puck?"

not to believe it," Pritchard said after meeting with Donohue in 2014. "It's a great story. Why would anyone make that up? We'd love to have that in the Hall of Fame. I don't know how we'd do it with the other (Barilko) puck already there, but we'd find a way. It's a terrific story that's worth telling and showing people."

"The entire Barilko story is mystical and has snowballed over the years. He's a cultural icon."

Next April marks the 65-year anniversary of the Barilko goal. And nothing would make the Donohue family happier than to see Harry's puck validated and shared by the Hall of Fame. "I'd love to see that Barilko puck on display in my dad's name," Dan said. "A few years before he died, he said to me 'Dan, whatever anybody ever says to you about the puck, just know this: it's the real thing.'" 



NHL TEAM R



GIO CODING THE IDEAL LEADER

Flames blueliner Giordano is humble about his success and grounded in his appreciation of what it takes to be an NHL captain

BY RANDY SPORTAK

JAROME IGINLA ALREADY HAS almost 600 NHL goals of his own to remember over the course of a career that will conclude with a trip to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

But being as much of a fan as the next guy, Iginla relishes the success of others. For example, Mark Giordano's first tally for

the Calgary Flames squad Iginla captained. That's in his memory banks, too. "That was a nice one, eh? Top shelf, too, right? Didn't he get two that game?" Iginla, now with the Colorado Avalanche, accurately recalls of Giordano's milestone goal against the Toronto Maple Leafs way back in the fall of 2006.

"You realize over the years it would be hard to be a scout, because some guys you know are going to be dynamite, but others can really surprise you."

Has there been a bigger surprise the past few seasons than Giordano, the Flames heart-and-soul captain? While the NHL is filled with can't-miss youngsters who become standouts, Giordano's route to where he is today is more circuitous.

He was nearly 19 when he joined the OHL's Owen Sound Attack, excited how a couple years' worth of scholarship money would help pay for school when his playing days were done. After two seasons with the Attack and leading their defensemen in scoring both years, he was set to attend Toronto's York University to study finance. Before hitting the books, however, Giordano received an invite to Calgary's

SNUFFED-OUT TROPHY

Giordano was a Norris candidate before getting hurt in Game 61. He finished sixth in voting.

summer prospects camp. At the conclusion, he was offered a deal, a three-way contract with a salary for the NHL, a smaller salary for the AHL and an even lower stipend in the ECHL. No signing bonus, either. "Maybe a couple of sticks I was given at development camp and took home," Giordano said.

Three seasons spent mostly in the minors brought him to another crossroads. Instead of accepting a two-way deal with the Flames, Giordano boldly opted to play in Russia for Moscow Dynamo, which most people figured would be the end of his time in the NHL.

Instead, he returned for 2008-09 and steadily willed

REPORTS

himself to become one of the NHL's best blueliners. Calgary left winger Brandon Bollig didn't grasp the scope of Giordano until Bollig arrived from Chicago in 2014. "One of the first things I realized when I came here is how good he really is," Bollig said. "I never knew the type of player he was playing against him, but once you see how hard he works and what he brings to the team, not only in point production but also the intangibles, you realize he's one of the better captains in the league."

Certainly the right captain at the right time for a Flames team that went into rebuild mode a few years ago, starting with the trade of Iginla in 2012-13, only to improve ahead of schedule and reach the second round of the playoffs last spring.

Not only has Giordano, 32, elevated his game on the scoresheets, he's been a driving force to guide a young squad. "He's such an easy guy to coach because he's always on a mission," said coach Bob Hartley. "He set high standards for himself, and that's why he's our captain. It's not by luck his career took off. When you spend days around the man, not the player but the man, you understand."

Giordano the person is just as likable as the player.

He's quiet and low-key. His idea of summer fun when he, wife Lauren and their young son Jack return to Toronto in the off-season is to go to a Blue Jays or Toronto FC game. "I'm not a travel guy," he said. "I go on a vacation and I'm sick of it after a few days. I don't live too exciting of a life."

Giordano missed the last quarter of 2014-15 and play-offs when he tore his biceps tendon in February. At the time, he had 48 points in 61 games and was a front-runner for the Norris Trophy. Flames GM Brad Treliving said in the off-season Calgary's priority was getting its captain signed before he became an unrestricted free agent in 2016. A new six-year, \$40.5-million contract kicks in next season, but don't expect the financial security to change his humble approach to hockey.

Before every game, Giordano honors his late sister, Mia, who died in a car accident at 20 in 1998, tapping his helmet with his stick to remind him to enjoy the game and not take anything for granted. To give back to a community that's given so much to him, he and his wife work with three Calgary schools



“WHEN YOU SPEND DAYS AROUND HIM, NOT THE PLAYER BUT THE MAN, YOU UNDERSTAND

– Bob Hartley

providing computers and sports equipment as well as advising students about setting success-oriented goals. He's also spearheading a project to build homes in Calgary and overseas with Habitat for Humanity.

To him, the best person to be is yourself, even as a leader. "I try

to treat people the way I want to be treated," Giordano said. "It's a cliché, but as a captain, I don't believe in the hierarchy of older guys treating younger guys poorly. As a person, I don't think I've changed too much, hopefully. And I hope others would say the same thing." **THE**

LATE GREATS

There's no better find on the Flames 'D' than the undrafted Giordano, but he's not alone in the "overlooked" category: three other Calgary top-six blueliners were drafted in the third round or later, though the Flames can only take credit for unearthing Brodie.



241

DENNIS WIDEMAN
in 2002



67

KRIS RUSSELL
in 2005



114

T.J. BRODIE
in 2008



CAPITAL BEAST ON THE BLUELINE

With each passing season, Carlson is raising the bar on what he accomplishes and, in turn, what Washington expects to see from him

BY BRIAN MCNALLY

JOHNN CARLSON BURST ONTO the scene as an unfinished American hero.

Within months of winning the world juniors for the U.S. with a stunning overtime goal against Canada in 2010, he was playing in the Stanley Cup playoffs for the Washington Capitals. For years, Carlson has been a key cog for a team that is almost always competitive.

Overshadowed by bigger names – Alex Ovechkin, Nicklas

Backstrom, Mike Green – Carlson was always the reliable young defenseman on a blue-line trying to find an identity under four different coaches. But almost without anyone noticing, Carlson has moved into a veteran's role at 25. "I've always tried to prepare myself the best I can," Carlson said. "But just getting a little more comfortable, getting older, getting to know your body a bit more has helped. And also coming into

STEADY PROGRESSION

Carlson has gone from fresh, young face to two-way force for Washington in a few short years.

this year is different than coming into last year."

That's because Carlson knows what to expect from second-year coach Barry Trotz and assistant Todd Reirden, who coaches Washington's defensemen. Carlson has also played a full year with Brooks Orpik on his left side. Carlson had a fine 2014-15 with 12 goals and 55 points and finished 10th in Norris Trophy voting. But the Caps believe there is still more he can give. "If you can get a good player to be pushed to become an elite player, that's where we'd like to see John go to," Trotz said.

Now, in his sixth full NHL season, Carlson has a chance to take that next step toward stardom. He's already played for the U.S. at the 2014 Olympics and is a sure bet to make the World Cup roster next summer. Only four NHL defensemen topped Carlson's point total last season. Through Washington's first eight games, he already had 10. "One of the main things is the confidence and leadership role he's taking," said Caps D-man Karl Alzner. "He knows he's one of the go-to guys. When he plays good, the team plays good. He's been able to take to that and thrive. Last year he was phenomenal, and he's off to a great start. He's bumped it up to the next level."

With the departure of Green as a free agent to Detroit, only Alzner (434 games) has played more games on the Washington blue-line than Carlson (405). As young players, he and Alzner were often paired together, learning the ropes on the job.

It worked, but last year both players benefited from new partners – Orpik, now in his 13th NHL season, and Matt Niskanen. Both came via free agency from Pittsburgh. Orpik and Reirden, especially,

have helped drill the smaller, unnoticed details into Carlson's game. "John was a very good young player," Trotz said. "There's a maturity in his game now, an acceptance of what the demands of a top defenseman are. In the past, John would play on instinct and ability and smarts to be a good player. Now there's a level of consistency."

As a defenseman with top-tier offensive skills, that means working rigorously on his shot – corraling pucks smoothly, firing them off quickly. It means better footwork, being more aware of positioning.

In seasons past, Trotz said, Carlson might have flipped a puck into the neutral zone when tired. Now, he's more likely to take the extra three strides and fire a pass to a teammate, keeping possession instead of giving it away. And at 6-foot-3, 215 pounds, Carlson gets pushed around less now. That physicality took time to acquire. "You see him get mean at times, which is nice," Alzner said. "He's a big body, a strong guy. He can play that way."

Carlson hasn't missed a game in five years, including 51 playoff games. His minutes have stabilized the past three seasons at about 23 per game. He was a 37-point player two years ago before the career-best 55 last season. With expected increased minutes running an elite power play with Green gone, a 70-point explosion isn't out of range.

For that, Carlson credits Reirden – but also previous blue-line coaches Calle Johansson, Jim Johnson and Bob Woods plus Dale Hunter, a Caps legend and Carlson's coach in junior and for most of the 2011-12 season in Washington. It's been a process. The Caps believe Carlson is almost there. "There's something to be said for learning from every coach," Carlson said. "Everybody's smart. Everybody's intelligent in the game. I'm a better player taking things from each coach. And now with the stability and getting used to everything, it's great. We're really going in the right direction." **THE**

TOP 10 NAMESAKES

It's serendipitous two of the best defensemen in the game today have the same surname. But are they the most famous hockey Carlsons (sic)? You be the judge. Here are 10 who played in the big leagues.



JOHN CARLSON

Not only is he among the most skilled blueliners in the NHL, he's also durable, not having missed a game in more than five seasons.



KENT CARLSON

The St. Lawrence product was a second-round pick in 1982 and stepped into the Habs lineup at 21. He didn't have staying power.



STEVE, JEFF & JACK CARLSON

The Hanson brothers of Slap Shot fame were inspired and played by the Carlson brothers – Steve and Jeff, anyway. That's David Hanson playing Jack Hanson, whose character was inspired by Jack Carlson. Get it?



ANDREAS KARLSSON

The tall Swede came to the NHL six years after getting drafted. He played five seasons on the fourth line for Atlanta and Tampa Bay.



ERIK KARLSSON

The most offensively gifted rear-guard in today's game has two Norris Trophies in four seasons and at 25 is entering his prime.



ANDERS KARLSSON

Sandwiched around a three-year stint with New Jersey and its farm team was a productive 20-year career in his native Sweden.



HENRIK KARLSSON

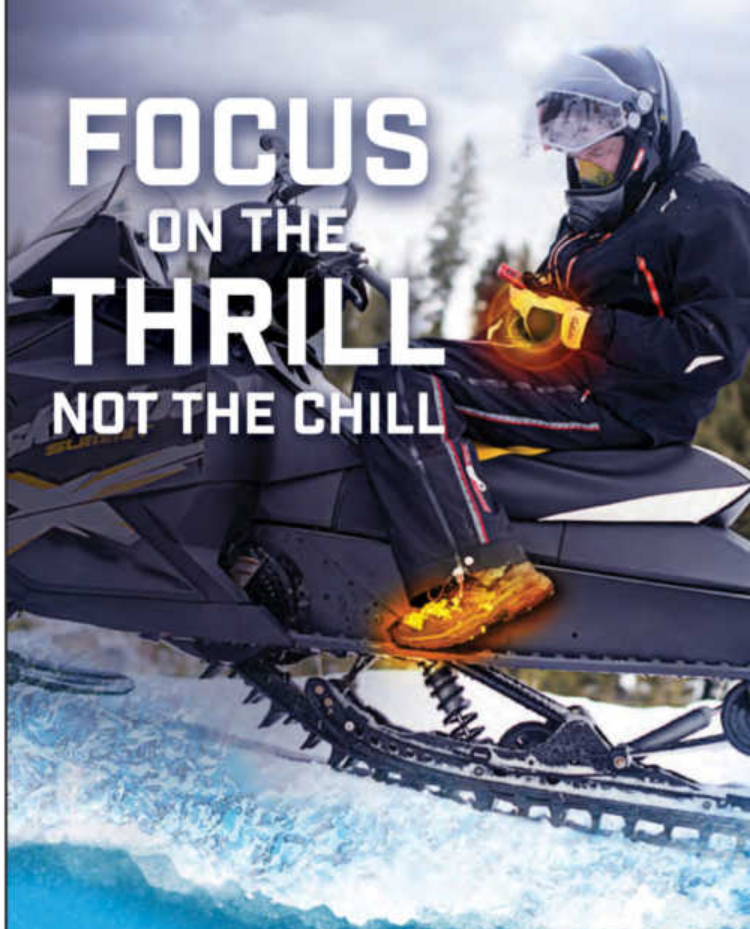
They called him the 'Calgary Tower' when he was a Flame. But he fell to his knees too much and was gone after 26 NHL games.



ERIC LINDROS

What's the 'Big E' doing on this page dedicated to Carlsons? Remember, his father was his agent. Eric is Carl's son.

FOCUS ON THE THRILL NOT THE CHILL



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RECHARGEABLE
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3 HEAT
SETTINGS



SWEET SWEDES ADD FLAVOR TO DUCKS

Anaheim was once a team defined by Finnish stars. But now the Swedish revolution is slowly taking over

BEING ROOMMATES IN SOUTHERN California has made it easier for Rickard Rakell and Hampus Lindholm to cope with living far away from their native Sweden. But the living arrangement has its limits.

The Anaheim Ducks' talented youngsters enjoy each other's cooking and down time away from the rink. The living arrangement isn't so great when one is kept awake by the other's snoring. Away from home, it's time to be apart. "We figured out it's best we're not with each other all the time," Rakell said. "It's going to hurt us. It works out living together in Anaheim. But it's also good to be away from each other."

What's best about their friendship is they can readily relate to each other in their own language. Communicating on the ice in Swedish may give them a small advantage, but off-ice it allows them to be themselves without having to translate internally before talking. "It's tough sometimes when you have to think about everything you want to say," Rakell said of speaking English. "Your brain gets tired sometimes. It's nice to be home and be yourself."

Anaheim has taken on a serious Swedish flavor in recent years. At the

draft in June, the team acquired Carl Hagelin from New York to add him to a roster with Lindholm, Rakell and Jakob Silfverberg. Plus prospects Jacob Larsson, Marcus Pettersson and Max Friberg are in the pipeline.

There's a lot of interest in the Ducks from across the pond. Gunnar Nordstrom, who covers the NHL for Swedish daily *Expressen*, believes the team is following the example of a noteworthy Original Six team. "The Ducks are competing with Detroit to be the 'Swedish team' in the NHL," Nordstrom said.

Silfverberg calls the 22-year-old Rakell the "most outgoing" Swede who brings the most smiles to the dressing room. "Overall, we're pretty laid-back," Silfverberg said. "But 'Raks' is a little bit of a joker."

The Swedish influx has Sami Vatanen concerned. It wasn't long ago he was part of a Finnish contingent on the Ducks that included icons Teemu Selanne and Saku Koivu. "I don't like it that way," Vatanen proclaimed with mock anger. "We have too many Swedes now. They're good guys, but enough is enough, especially if you're from Finland. It's a little weird thing for me with that many Swedes." — **ERIC STEPHENS**

MOST COLORFUL PERSONALITY



Ryan Getzlaf has been making colorful videos for years, so he's the obvious pick, but **Ryan Kesler** takes the cake this year. The former Canuck posed in his underwear and side-profile nude for photo shoots in his Vancouver days. And his Robert DeNiro-like persona in Anaheim's *Between Two Zambonis* is worth more than a few chuckles.



Captain and 20-year vet **Shane Doan** does more than set a good example on and off the ice for the young Coyotes. He's a practising Christian who writes a Bible verse on his sticks. He and his wife and four children live on a horse ranch. Doan teamed with brother Brook to act as prey on the reality TV series *Mantracker* in 2011.



Brad Marchand's Wikipedia page reads, "Marchand has a very prominent nose." He's parlayed that large proboscis into the nickname 'Nose Face Killah.' Feisty Marchand is the quintessential player hated by opposing fans but loved by his own. He has a misspelled Stanley Cup tattoo and speaks his mind on almost anything.



Evander Kane is one of the best-dressed NHLers and proud of his lively personality. He signed with a modelling agency, and though he won't be seen on Twitter speaking into a wad of cash again any time soon, he'll stay true to himself. Anyone who rents a billboard on the Sunset Strip to get his girlfriend back relishes the spotlight.



Jiri Hudler comes across as a brooder in media encounters, but when he's in his element he's a barrel of laughs. The Czech vet has a fiendish smile and exchanges quips with officials and opponents during stoppages in play. He softens the stoic approach to the game of his young linemates Sean Monahan and Johnny Gaudreau.



MOST COLORFUL PERSONALITY



Eddie Lack isn't just funny because of his taco tattoo or adulation for ex-teammate Roberto Luongo. With Lack, humor is a family affair. His mom once tweeted him a picture of a baby penguin before he was to face Pittsburgh, while he and his dad have emailed Lack's grandmother prank photos of the two posing with cases of beer.



You can't be a great agitator without a great personality, and **Andrew Shaw** loves to have fun. He once posed for a photo on the end of a yacht, embracing Patrick Kane to parody the famous *Titanic* shot. In major junior, Shaw pranked teammate Jesse Blacker by pouring water on his boxer shorts and putting them in the freezer.



Veteran **Cody McLeod** is beloved by teammates for his lunchpail mentality. You don't want him as an enemy, though. He led the NHL in fights last year and will blow a fuse if you throw animals at him. In a 2008 game against Detroit, when a fan tossed an octopus on the ice, McLeod scooped it and hucked it right back into the crowd.



Can we say coach John Tortorella here? No? OK. **Scott Hartnell** has been a fan favorite in many venues thanks to his on-ice work ethic, his toughness and his sometimes unruly red hair. But Hartnell's ability to laugh at himself is also a factor dating back to his days as a Flyer, when he turned the Hartnell Down meme into a charity.



Tyler Seguin lights the lamp as well as anyone on the ice. Off it, he's a tattooed playboy, known for driving expensive sports cars around Toronto in the off-season. He posed for a nude photo shoot in *ESPN The Magazine's* Body Issue this past summer. The classic Seguin twist: smirking while holding a rubber ducky over his private parts.



SPEZZA'S ROOTS GROW DEEPER

Pivot expects far more in second season with Stars now that he feels at home in the Lone Star State

JASON SPEZZA THOUGHT HE HAD IT all figured out.

He was ready for a move out of Ottawa, picked the right team in Dallas and was raring to go last season. And yet...it didn't work out the way he planned. "I underestimated just what a big change it was going to be, and that hurt me last year," Spezza said. "I'm more prepared this season."

And the extra year wasn't just about finding his spot on the ice. Spezza found a new neighborhood, got his kids situated in a new school and became a part of the Dallas landscape. Oh yeah, and the four-year contract extension at \$7.5 million per season didn't hurt. "We're ready to win now," said Stars GM Jim Nill, "and Jason Spezza is a big part of that."

That Spezza, 32, believes he had a bad season when he tallied 17 goals and 62 points in 82 games last year puts into perspective just how important he is to the organization. He tore out of the gate with seven points in his first five games this season, showing the old point-per-game form he flashed in Ottawa for 11 campaigns. What's more, he juggled linemates and found a way to have success with the likes of

Antoine Roussel, Vernon Fiddler, Ales Hemsky and, on a stellar line early in 2015-16, Mattias Janmark and Valeri Nichushkin. "I think that's going to be my role this year, and I'm fine with that," he said. "As a veteran player, you need to be able to adjust and help other players. That's what I'm trying to do."

Of course, Spezza also gets to play on a pretty talented power play with Jamie Benn, Tyler Seguin, Patrick Sharp and John Klingberg, and that's where a lot of his points are going to come from. Spezza said the Stars need to make use of the power play to carry momentum and put games away, things it didn't always do last season. And while the raw numbers should be good (Dallas was tied for fifth in power play goals in 2014-15 at 55), the execution has to be better. "It's like a lot of things with this team - we just need to be more consistent than we were last year," Spezza said. "We were so up and down last season, and we can't do that again. We need to get to that place where we know what kind of team we're going to be every night."

Sort of like getting a familiar feeling when what once was a new place finally feels like home. —MIKE HEIKA



JUST CALL HIM NAIL McYAKUPOV

Stalled top pick finally turns corner on development thanks to coaching patience and help from a new No. 1

WHEN THE EDMONTON OILERS drafted Connor McDavid last summer, they didn't just get a generational talent described as the best player since Sidney Crosby, they got a bonus first overall pick thrown in for free.

Nail Yakupov.

Yakupov, 22, had been dying on the vine since the Oilers took him in 2012, playing limited minutes on the third line, struggling to score and amassing the league's worst plus-minus over the past two years (minus-68).

The effort and determination were there, but he couldn't channel his energy in the right direction, resulting in a fast-paced but often aimless game that bore little resemblance to anything a coach drew on a whiteboard.

As the minuses piled up and the goals didn't, whispers of "busted pick" began filtering through press boxes. Then came McDavid and new coach Todd McLellan, and suddenly Yakupov is like a \$100 bill in the old suit jacket. Found money. He's cruising along at nearly a point-per-game pace, having forged instant chemistry with McDavid and Benoit Pouliot, something both Taylor Hall and Teddy Purcell failed

to do in their auditions. But Yakupov thinks he was turning a corner regardless of who he played with. "I hope and I believe my game hasn't just changed because of Connor McDavid," Yakupov said. "I've been showing improvement in camp and exhibition and the early games and then coach made the decision to put me with Connor."

He credits some of the change to McLellan and the staff helping him think the game better. They've been addressing his hockey IQ since the start of camp and the result is a less frenetic player. "A lot of videos, a lot of talking," Yakupov said. "Coach has done a good job, kind of channeled me, letting me know what I should do and what I should change. They're always trying to help me get better every day."

He improved to the point McLellan trusted him enough to give him top-six minutes with an 18-year-old rookie. "He's earned it," McLellan said. "It's not me rewarding him, it's him rewarding himself for some good play and the ability to create on that line."

His linemates like the new-look Yakupov. "He's starting to figure out," Pouliot said, "what will make him successful in this league." — **ROB TYCHKOWSKI**

MOST COLORFUL PERSONALITY



Pavel Datsyuk is Detroit's most electrifying player. He's also its most colorful character because of his dry wit. In an interview about playing center, Datsyuk once said, "The good news is I'm playing center. The bad news is I have to back-check." That has never been a problem for Datsyuk, nor has snapping off funny one-liners.



Fighters are often the biggest personalities on teams, and the Oilers' **Luke Gazdic** is no exception. His Twitter page shows him standing in front of a row of fans wearing a variety of Gazdic jerseys. The Toronto native isn't shy about his experiences meeting up with the Blue Jays on the road and shearing his long locks for charitable causes.



It's not a fair fight. **Jaromir Jagr** has had more time than any player on the Panthers – or in the NHL – to work on his act. Jagr has been the focal point on every one of his teams because of his sublime skill level and his playful demeanor. He recently tweeted a picture of him and Mike Tyson with the caption, "Hey Mike, I got bigger arms."



As fierce a competitor as **Drew Doughty** is, he's the opposite off the ice. He's described by teammates as fun-loving and mellow. He enjoys the California lifestyle at baseball games, movie premieres and social functions. Unlike a lot of athletes, he doesn't play with a poker face. He smiles and laughs at anything that entertains him.



If you want to feel alive, spend an off-season with adrenaline junkie **Nino Niederreiter**. He rolls with a group of fellow Swiss NHLers, including Roman Josi and Mark Streit, and they seek out extreme activities like skydiving. Niederreiter even met up and hung out with Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer at the most recent Wimbledon.



MOST COLORFUL PERSONALITY



P.K. Subban has been the Habs' most beloved player since he joined them in 2010. And like the hugely popular Saku Koivu before him, Subban has become even more adored by the Montreal faithful with his off-ice benevolence. Recently he donated \$10 million to the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation over seven years.



Carter Hutton fits the quirky goalie stereotype. He's an enterprising man, not just the organizer of a hockey school back home in Thunder Bay, but also a partner in a strip mall. He even runs his own fishing tournament. He earned a degree in business finance and entrepreneurship from the University of Massachusetts Lowell.



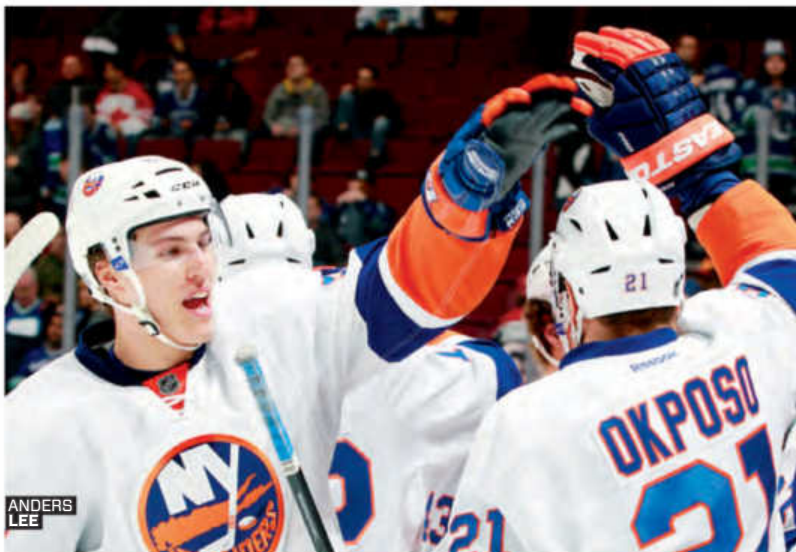
An open book when it comes to interviews, **Tuomo Ruutu** has a cheery demeanor with a recorder in front of him. Ironic considering what a pain the Finnish vet can be as an opponent on the ice. But the brother of super-pest Jarkko Ruutu seems to come by his breezy attitude naturally. That's cold comfort for opponents, though.



In his Minnesota days, **Cal Clutterbuck** used to have an ugly suit competition with Brent Burns, but you can't wear those on the ice. Clutterbuck's mustache, however, was so famous it had its own Twitter account. Now he has a beard, and the only question is if it still looks impressive when the big hitter hurtles toward a puck carrier.



As far as we know, only one free agency signing has ever been broken on Twitter by a heavy metal band. But Faith No More's relationship with **Dan Boyle** goes deeper than contract talk. This summer, the D-man put some other muscles to work when he joined the band as a roadie for a couple concert dates. He's a metal connoisseur.



CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Sublime skill in several sports put Lee in rare position to pick his path. He made the right call with hockey

I T HAS BEEN A WHIRLWIND JOURNEY for New York Islanders left winger Anders Lee, 25, from his hometown of Edina, Minn., to his new hockey hometown of Brooklyn. He calls it a surreal, dream-like experience. And it's nowhere near over, as he's part of an exciting young core of Islanders players moving forward.

A three-sport varsity athlete at Edina High School, Lee essentially had his pick of sports in which to pursue a pro career. He was a finalist for Minnesota's Mr. Football award in 2008 and Mr. Hockey in 2009. But he credits the hockey opportunities he was given for choosing to trade in his football pads and baseball glove for skates and a stick full time. The big opportunity arrived when the Isles drafted him 152nd overall in 2009. Being picked late didn't impact Lee's mindset, though. "I didn't have many expectations or much pressure put on me – I could just go out there and play," Lee said. "I learned that you've just got to put yourself in a position where you're hard to replace."

He started the process of putting himself in that position in the United States League, where he played a season for the Green Bay Gamblers and led

the team in scoring under now-Tampa Bay Lightning head coach Jon Cooper. "(Cooper) really helped me with my game and understanding what it takes to get to the next level," Lee said.

He notes that developing with USHL Green Bay, then NCAA Notre Dame and later with AHL Bridgeport were critical steps in his maturation as a player. "Everyone wants to make the jump to the NHL right away," he said. "But you can't rush yourself."

His development and the Islanders' patience were rewarded when Lee sniped 25 goals in his first full NHL season in 2014-15, earning himself a four-year, \$15-million contract this summer. It's clear this season how Lee has made himself indispensable. He earned a spot on the top line alongside superstar John Tavares after a strong training camp.

So what's the next stop on Lee's journey? Bringing his teammates up to speed in *Call of Duty* for Xbox before the next team-wide match and watching out for agitator Cal Clutterbuck. "You've got guys who are on the mics chirping each other," Lee said. "Clutter's for sure on the mic all the time. It's pretty funny seeing some of these guys play, because their styles are so bad." — **MICHAEL WILLHOFT**



'BLUE BY YOU' MAKING A NAME

Rookie St. Louis defenseman Parayko took the less-travelled path to the NHL and is opening eyes

IF THE NAME COLTON PARAYKO DOESN'T ring a bell, you don't repair glass at Vancouver's Rogers Arena and you're not Winnipeg goalie Ondrej Pavelec.

Parayko is an unknown 22-year-old defenseman with St. Louis whose powerful slapshot shattered the glass behind Canucks goalie Ryan Miller Oct. 16 and then two days later had Pavelec down in pain after making a save. "I didn't think Pavelec was coming back," said Blues teammate Alexander Steen.

And three days before the broken-glass shot, Parayko scored his first two NHL goals in Calgary. So who is this guy?

A native of St. Albert, Alta., the 6-foot-5, 225-pound blueliner was cut from his midget AAA team and wasn't even selected in the WHL draft. At 16 and 5-foot-8 at the time, he was playing for the St. Albert midget AA Crusaders. "I wasn't sure where hockey was going to take me based on where I was playing," Parayko said.

In his second year of midget, he grew to 6-foot-4. His next stop was the Fort McMurray Jr. A Oil Barons, where the Blues sniffed him out and went to extreme measures to hide their interest. Former scout Marshall Davidson limited his visits to games at Fort McMurray,

which is 270 miles northeast of Edmonton. Though Parayko's name was not listed among the 210 North American skaters leading up to the 2012 draft, the Blues took him 86th overall. His next stop was the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. "College gave me a few more years to develop," he said. "There were a few older guys, stronger guys, maybe tougher to play against."

Parayko played three seasons at Alaska, using the lighter college schedule to add muscle mass, and then in March 2015 signed a two-year deal with the Blues. He reported to Chicago of the AHL, where he had four goals and seven points in 17 games.

Parayko was on the radar when Blues' camp began but didn't look any higher than 11th on the 'D' depth chart. "He earned one (exhibition) game, then another," coach Ken Hitchcock said. "He was still standing at the end of the day."

The Blues kept Parayko on their opening-night roster, and he's made a name for himself. "People didn't project the kid's work ethic," said Blues director of player development Tim Taylor. "That surpassed everyone else. He's a late bloomer, but he's worked his tail off." — JEREMY RUTHERFORD

MOST COLORFUL PERSONALITY



Fans appreciate **Bobby Ryan's** commitment to the Sens and allegiance to his new home. After Mexico beat Canada in an Olympic qualifying basketball tournament this summer, Ryan tweeted: "Someone should knock the Venezuela coaches' (sic) teeth in for running around like that after he won on a bad call. I'm not even Canadian."



Jakub Voracek has some serious flow. But it's not just hair that makes him a rock star. The talented Czech is a big music fan and hasn't been afraid of showing off his pipes. The results aren't always pretty — check out the rendition of *Jingle Bells* he and some fellow Flyers posted back in 2014 — but he was still game.



If you're going to face speeding vulcanized rubber as a job, it helps to have a sense of humor. **Marc-Andre Fleury** proved that this season with a bang-on impression of Denis Lemieux from the classic hockey flick *Slap Shot*, recreating the French-Canadian character's studio set interview with Penguins reporter Dan Potash.



No one can match **Steve Ott's** dedication to trash talking. The shift disturber memorizes taunts in various languages in his spare time so he can verbally get under the skin of any opponent from any nation. As a Buffalo Sabre in the 2012-13 season, he once licked the helmet of Montreal's Jeff Halpern as they lined up for a faceoff.



In another era, **Brent Burns** would come across as eccentric. But he's been in the hockey world for such a long time, he's accepted as one of the most colorful personalities in the game. Besides using his body as a tattoo canvas and combing his cranial hair and beard with a garden weasel, Burns is a lover of exotic pets, including snakes.

RYAN: ANDRE RINGUETTE/GETTY IMAGES; VORACEK: OTT: ANDY DEVLIN/GETTY IMAGES; FLEURY: ANDRE RINGUETTE/GETTY IMAGES; PARAYKO: GERRY THOMAS/GETTY IMAGES; BURNS: GRAIG ABEL/GETTY IMAGES

MOST COLORFUL PERSONALITY



Tampa's most colorful character stands behind the bench, but **Brian Boyle** is tops among the players with his sneaky sense of humor. The fact he's 6-foot-7 makes him stand out anywhere. Coming from a family of 13 honed his ability to get attention, too. As a Ranger, Boyle played the role of Buddy the Elf to the hilt at the team Christmas party.



Leo Komarov has been a cult hero since he came to Toronto in 2012. The Estonian-born Finnish national hits with reckless abandon and a smile on his face. He speaks four languages and is also an accomplished pianist. A video of him playing for sick children during a team hospital visit last season went viral on social media.



The departure of garrulous gagsters Kevin Bieksa and Eddie Lack opened the door for a new colorful leader in the dressing room. Though he's new to the Canucks, **Brandon Prust** had the chops in Calgary, New York and Montreal to endear himself to teammates and media. Always good for a quote, he has been known to cross the line.



His Putin T-shirts may not be kosher on this side of the world, but he's still the same lovable **Alex Ovechkin**. The Caps superstar always has childlike mischief in his eye. His world is a constant source of entertainment. Who else in the NHL would cause confusion as to whether he got a ship or a sheep for his 30th birthday? (It was a sheep.)



The Jets boast several characters, but **Dustin Byfuglien** trumps all. He videobombs teammates while they're interviewed. Last year, he tried sneaking into a Capitals timeout during a game. He even Marshawn Lynch a media scrum during the 2015 playoffs, answering every question with virtually the same response.



TALENTED TROUBA HAS ALL THE TOOLS

Third-year Jets blueliner becoming more refined at picking his spots and going with the flow

EVER TRIED TO USE A HAMMER, wrench and drill all at the same time? Now you have the picture of Winnipeg Jets defenseman Jacob Trouba as a rookie. He got lots done but stripped a few bolts and banged his thumb more than once. "He's got so many tools," said Mark Stuart, Trouba's defensive partner. "Maybe at the beginning he tried to use all of them at once. But now he's learned when to pick his spots, when to rush the puck, when to get into the offense and when to back off and play position."

Trouba, just 21 but already in his third full-time NHL season, has learned some patience, allowing the game to come to him more, as opposed to frequently chasing it. In addition to that patience, mainly learning to be aggressive at the right times, the Michigan native has become even better at moving on from his mistakes.

That's a good thing, because there have been a few costly errors along the way. "He's good at that – you can't let mistakes bother you in this league," said Jets assistant coach Charlie Huddy. "You're going to make them. Teams are good. But that's not him, letting it bother him."

Out of the gate as a rookie in 2013-14, Trouba was given oodles of responsibility and led first-year players in the NHL in average ice time, 22:26. In Year 2, it increased to 23:19, putting Trouba more in the line of fire, but the Jets and their young defenseman progressed to the playoffs.

This season, the number is down, just under 20 minutes, as coach Paul Maurice tries to find enough time for a strong right side of his defense – Trouba, Dustin Byfuglien and Tyler Myers. "It's obviously hard," Trouba said. "He's got three guys that want to play and be on the ice so I just go out and do what I'm asked to do. That's all I can do."

After 29 points as a rookie, Trouba fell back to 22 in 2014-15 and was without a goal in 32 regular season and playoff games going back to last season.

One thing that needs doing is a new contract. Trouba is into the final year of his entry-level deal and, given how much the team relies on him, figures to be in line for a major raise.

He's in no hurry for the jackpot some prognosticators think he will hit. "I'll play the year and deal with that after," he said. "That's the way I've always done things." – **TIM CAMPBELL**

PROSPECT REPORT



REILLY ON THE RADAR

Minnesota taking patient approach to preparing defensive prospect. That path takes Reilly through the heart of Iowa

BY KEN CAMPBELL

FOR THREE YEARS, MIKE REILLY had his nose in a book at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. In his first year of pro, he's clearly changed his major to film studies at the post-secondary institution known as the American League.

Like every young defenseman, Reilly has found himself spending much of his time off the ice in front of a monitor with him being the star of the show. In his first season with the Iowa Wild, Reilly is under the tutelage of Professor John Torchetti, the Wild's coach and the man charged with ushering Reilly through the most difficult adjust-

MIKE REILLY



POSITION

Defenseman

AGE 22

HEIGHT 6-2

WEIGHT 187 lbs

ACQUIRED

Free agent, July, '15

MIKE ABOUT WILD

Reilly walked away from the Columbus Blue Jackets to sign with hometown Minnesota.

ment of his hockey career.

Scouts are unanimous in their opinion that a player's most difficult transition is from junior or college to the AHL, and there are a select few who avoid that awkward stage. Even the most sought-after college free agents, who are mostly more mature, can get a rude awakening to life in the pros. How long Reilly works in the minors is uncertain, but there doesn't appear to be a rush to jam him into an NHL lineup. "Usually he'll watch (video) with his partner," Torchetti said of Reilly's off-ice sessions. "And when I have time for 1-on-1, I always want to spend that time with certain guys. I want to hear how they think the game, what they think of their positioning, why they picked a certain play, and that's how you get to know them."

Torchetti is learning Reilly is a quick study when it comes to grasping the defensive/positioning aspects of the game. He already knew the offensive skills were there and the skating and puck moving abilities were a huge part of Reilly's game (he averaged better than a point per game in his final NCAA season). The issue is developing Reilly into a defenseman who can be counted on in all situations at the NHL level. It will happen after he learns better defensive positioning, learns the nuances of the pro game and acquires the strength and bulk necessary to defend against the best players on the planet.

But Reilly is not unaccustomed to learning on the fly and keeping his head about him during chaos. After all, he had to do it this past summer when he decided to pass on signing with the Columbus Blue Jackets, the

team that drafted him 98th overall in 2011, to become an unrestricted free agent at 21. His free agency kicked off a frenzy.

Nine teams expressed an interest in signing him. He decided to sign a two-year deal with his hometown Wild, a franchise with which his father, Michael Sr., is an ownership group investor. The family ties didn't hurt, but neither did a call from Zach Parise when he was trying to make his decision. "In June it definitely got pretty crazy," Reilly said. "It was a unique experience for me to be in and it was really hectic for those few weeks. I was kind of waiting for it to calm down and get back to just being me."

A good showing in Minnesota's rookie camp did not result in full-time employment with the parent club off the hop, but the Wild would not have pursued him so vigorously had they not been convinced he will one day be a very good NHL defenseman. They watched as Mathew Dumba, who now has a full-time job on Minnesota's blueline, had hiccups as a pro – and incidentally had a number of video sessions with Torchetti in the minors for 20 games last season – and they're going to be patient with Reilly as well.

It's a young defense in Minnesota. Ryan Suter, 30, is the only regular older than 25. Jared Spurgeon, Marco Scandella, Jonas Brodin, Dumba and Swedish rookie Christian Folin are still growing as players. And the hope is Reilly can join that group in the next couple of seasons. "At this stage of his development, the most important thing is to make sure he's getting the reps, getting a lot of games, getting a lot of ice time," said Minnesota GM Chuck Fletcher. "We're taking the time to make the right decision." **TEN**

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Draft slot of Reilly's dad, also named Mike, who was picked by the Montreal Canadiens in 1977. He was selected out of Colorado College and also spent a couple years at the University of Minnesota. He never played pro hockey.



PUTTING THE FUN BACK IN FLINT

The Michigan city has long been a hockey hotbed before falling on hard times. The OHL Firebirds aim to breathe in new life

BY RYAN KENNEDY

THE FIRST FOUR SUB-TOPICS that pop up when you type "Flint, Michigan" into Google Images are pretty harrowing: Ghetto, Ghost Town, Crime, Abandoned.

So when the OHL's Plymouth Whalers were moved this summer to Flint, the rechristened Firebirds had a bit of a PR battle on their hands. The team had a solid veteran core with NHL picks such as goalie Alex Nedeljkovic (Carolina), right winger Connor Chatham (New Jersey) and defenseman Alex Peters (Dallas), but they were

Plymouth holdovers. Would it be harder to retain and bring in talent when parents look at their teen son's potential new mailing address? "That's what we focused in on this summer," said coach John Gruden. "We showed them the arena, the high school and the Grand Blanc area, which is really coming alive."

Grand Blanc is technically a suburb of Flint and that's where the players will billet and attend high school. The two locales couldn't be more different in terms of reputation (and crime

DETROIT GEM

Red Wings pick Saarijarvi hopes playing in Flint is a harbinger of a long career in Michigan.

rate), but the key for the Firebirds is to get that message out.

Vili Saarijarvi, a Detroit Red Wings pick in 2015, was taken by Flint in the CHL import draft. The slick offensive defenseman from Finland had played for Green Bay in the USHL last season but had limited knowledge of Flint itself. "I didn't know that much before they drafted me," he said. "Then I started hearing not-so-good things. But it's not that bad. I like it here. Every town has bad areas, but we're living in a good area, so I don't have any problems."

The young Finn went straight from Finland's world junior camp in Lake Placid, N.Y., to Flint this summer. Saarijarvi arrived in July, three weeks before most of his new teammates, and was impressed with the staff, the organization and his billet family.

A star for Finland at the world under-18s last season, he helped the squad to a silver medal and was named the tournament's best defenseman. That encouraged the Detroit Red Wings to nab him with the 73rd pick overall this summer. "He can create offense, run a power play and has the ability to transport or pass the puck and transition it quickly to offense," said Red Wings GM Ken Holland. "He plays hard. He has to get stronger, but he's a great kid and he loves to compete."

Getting players such as Saarijarvi to come to Flint will be crucial for Gruden and GM Terry Christensen, particularly since neither has any background in the OHL. Gruden came from USA Hockey's National Team Development Program, while Christensen's background is a fascinating pastiche: he's been a coach in the ECHL, an assistant coach at Michigan State and even a team consultant in the Czech Republic.

Firebirds assistant GM Joe Stefan was retained from the Plymouth Whalers' old crew and Gruden said he has been

crucial in the transition. But when it comes to navigating the league, the Firebirds braintrust has catching up to do.

The first brutal lesson came this summer, when the Firebirds selected center Ryan McLeod third overall in the OHL draft. McLeod didn't report and what followed was a drawn-out process that eventually ended when the Firebirds traded him to Mississauga, where his brother Michael was playing. Flint received three second-round picks and three third-round picks from the Steelheads, plus two compensatory selections from the OHL – but no roster players.

The Firebirds will need to hit on those picks in order to replenish their ranks in the coming years – and as long as they can convince that talent to come to Flint, they'll give the fans a really good team to root for. While the Firebirds play in an old barn, they did refurbish the building, which was known as Perani Arena and is now the Dort Federal Credit Union Event Center, and early reports are very positive: the new lower bowl seats look sweet and the crowds have been amped.

And while outsiders visiting the arena may notice security is a little more attentive (in a reassuring way) when it comes to the parking lot than in most other OHL cities, the updated rink has also seen some pretty nice crowds in the early going.

Hockey isn't new to Flint, of course. The minor-league Generals started off in 1969 and had a long run in the old International League. Flint pretty much always had a team until recently and the Firebirds fill that niche. Economically, the city has long been dependent on the auto industry and a wave of plant closures in the late 1980s sent the town into a spiral, culminating in high crime rates that continue to this day.

But with the OHL season now in full swing, the Firebirds are working at building up the Flint name on-ice. Perhaps soon, opponents will shudder at the name "Flint" for a different reason. **TEN**



VILI SAARIJARVI

POS D AGE 18 HT 5-10 WT 163 lbs
DRAFTED Detroit, 73rd overall in 2015



OLIVER OOZES SKILL, POISE

Kylington is still just a teenager playing against men. His initiation to the AHL has shown promise, but with bumps in the road

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

OLIVER KYLINGTON EMBODIES confidence. From the way he strides onto the ice, as a teenager amongst men in the AHL, to how he handles himself off it, the 18-year-old Swede always has that "it" factor about him.

You can see it when he's quarterbacking a power play for the Calgary Flames' AHL affiliate, the Stockton Heat. And his teammates have noticed how Kylington carries himself in the dressing room. "He doesn't act like an 18-year-old," said Stockton goaltender Jon Gillies. "It's only been a couple weeks. But he's never down on himself on the ice or off the ice."

And here's the thing: almost any other teenager's confidence would be shot after what Kylington – pronounced SHEE-ling-tun – endured last year. He started last season with Farjestad in the Swedish League, but inconsistent play and defensive struggles led to a demotion to AIK in

the Swedish second division. He also missed a chance to play in the 2015 world juniors due to an injury. Then he endured spotlight embarrassment at the 2015 NHL draft in June.

Projected to go in the first half of the first round, Kylington watched 29 NHL teams pass on him, twice, before he was selected 60th overall. "Now I don't care about that," he said. "The draft is a draft, it's like a game. Forget about it, move on."

And the six-foot, 185-pound blueliner lives that mantra in California, where Stockton is part of the AHL's new Pacific Division. He lives with 30-year-old teammate Blair Riley. Kylington's dad, Borje, was visiting for a couple weeks and that support group has helped, but Kylington said he's used to cooking and taking care of himself, even if there are times he misses friends and family. "That's the only tough thing," he said. "But playing hockey? That's not a tough thing."

FEELIN' THE HEAT

Kylington is eligible to play in the WHL (Brandon), but the Flames prefer he learns in the AHL.

His shot and skating ability have excited Calgary's brass. And Kylington says the north-south game in North America better suits him than the expansive east-west game on international ice.

But the young Swede has a lot to learn before he's NHL ready. He's working on defensive responsibility, decision making and positioning required in the AHL and NHL, and sometimes his confidence deceives him as he tries to force plays that work against teens. "There are times where it's like, 'Wow, this kid is only 18 and he's doing things like that?'" said Stockton coach Ryan Huska. "He's learning as we move along."

There are times Kylington has looked out of place. Texas defenseman Ludwig Bystrom, a former teammate with Frolunda, said he felt his team could take advantage of holes in Kylington's game. And there are times Kylington tries to do too much and gets caught when the simple play is the better option.

But Huska already sees growth. Kylington who doesn't turn 19 until May, is "very coachable" and has responded well to video sessions. On the pro side, Kylington's skating and shot are already NHL caliber, and he doesn't panic with the puck. Sometimes he looks too much for the big play, but that's a maturity thing as he learns the professional game.

It shouldn't be a surprise a member of the Kylington family is thriving as a youngster in a new environment. His mother, Teber Zeru, fled the civil war-torn nation of Eritrea when she was a teen and found refuge in Sweden, where she met Kylington's father. "Going from Africa to Sweden, that seems more difficult than coming to Calgary or California," Kylington said.

Kylington also credits his upbringing for his exuding confidence. His parents supported him as he tried soccer and floorball before hockey. And in all three sports, Kylington endured a trial by fire in Stockholm – a nice precursor to his rookie AHL season. "You have to be confident growing up in that neighborhood," Kylington said. "We're pretty rough on each other. So you have to have confidence to survive." **THE**

OLIVER KYLINGTON



POSITION

Defenseman

AGE

18

HEIGHT

6-0

WEIGHT

185 lbs

DRAFTED

Calgary,
60th in 2015

4

Rank for Kylington on some draft lists prior to 2014-15. He fell to late in Round 2 by June



BORDER WARS HEATING UP

A growing number of top prospects have dual citizenship, creating recruitment battles between Canada and the U.S.

JAKE WALMAN WAS A WANTED MAN THIS summer. A dual citizen, the St. Louis draft pick and Providence College defenseman was invited to junior camps for Canada and the U.S. Walman's mom is from Connecticut, but he was born and raised in Toronto. In the end, he chose America. "The U.S. came to a bunch of my games and had contact with my coach," Walman said. "Being in the NCAA, I fit in better with the USA guys."

The puck-moving blueliner was second among Friars D-men in scoring as a freshman. He helped Providence win the national title last season. Walman will be a strong candidate for Team USA's world junior squad, and he is emblematic of an intense recruiting war between North America's hockey powers for talent.

In an increasingly global world, hockey players are crossing borders more often, and that means top talents have choices when it comes to which international jerseys they will don.

One reason for the flurry is the number of second-generation players coming

to the forefront. OHLers Jakob Chychrun and Logan Brown were both born in the U.S. but spent their summers outside of Ottawa together thanks to their fathers – ex-NHLers and buddies Jeff Chychrun and Jeff Brown. The boys are dual citizens and can pick which country to play for. Both tried out for Canada's Ivan Hlinka

“PLAYERS ARE CROSSING BORDERS MORE OFTEN, AND THAT MEANS TOP TALENTS HAVE CHOICES – CANADA OR U.S.”

ka tournament team, but Chychrun got injured while Brown was cut. The Ivan Hlinka is not an IIHF event, so a player could suit up for one country there and another at the world under-18s, though the Hlinka is a pretty good indicator. But Brown went on to play at USA Hockey's All-American Prospects Game a month

STARS AND STRIPES

Walman's NCAA connections made him accept Team USA's world junior camp invitation over Canada's.

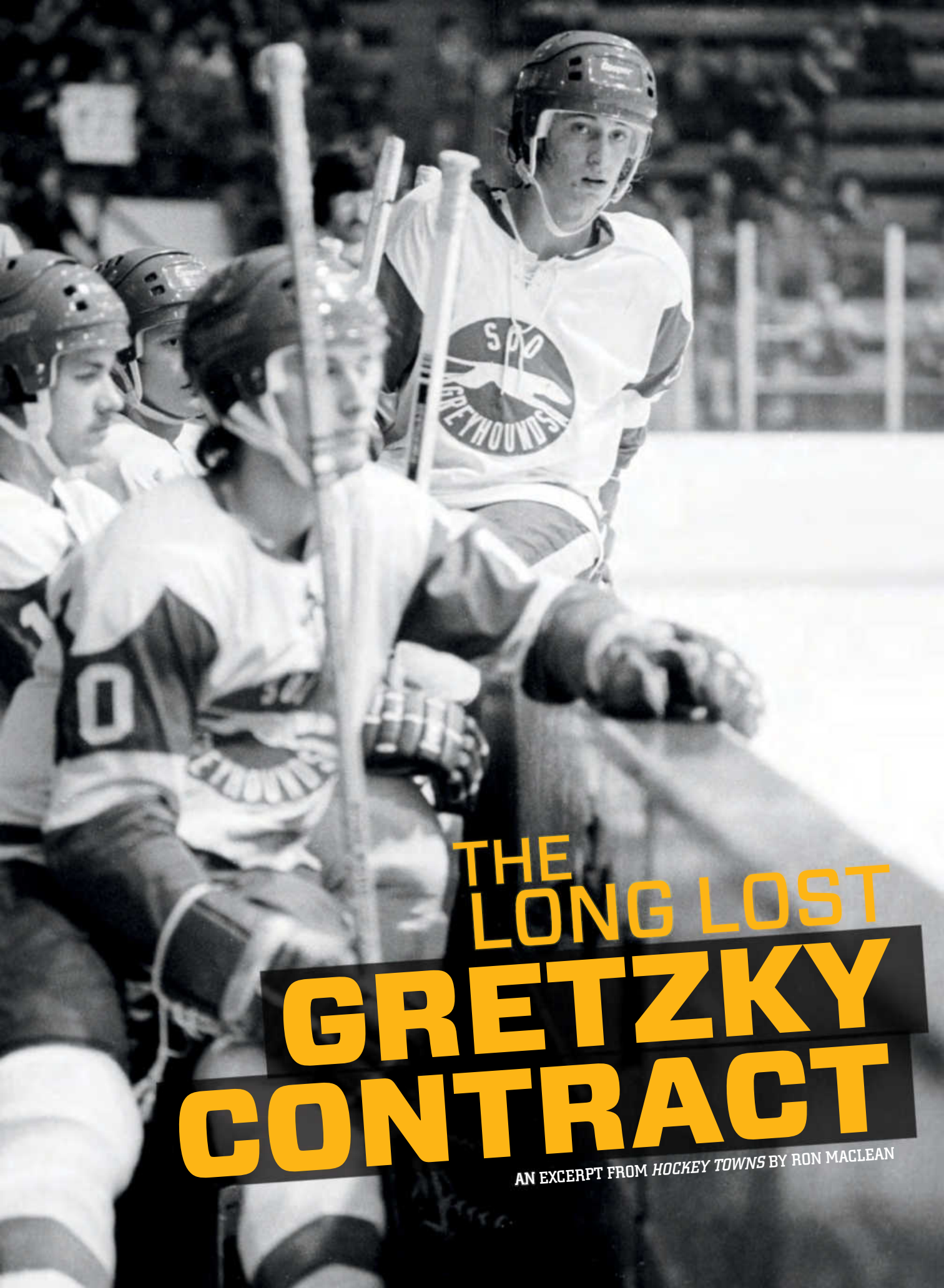
later, so is that an indicator? As it turns out, Brown is still deciding which nation to associate himself with, while Chychrun has thrown in his lot with Canada.

Chychrun and Brown are 2016 draft prospects and Chychrun, a defenseman, is a probable top three pick. Another key blueliner in this draft class is Michael Campoli, a Boston College commit born in Montreal but playing for U.S. National Team Development Program thanks to dual citizenship (his mother is from New Jersey but met her husband at university in Montreal). On the NTDP's under-17 squad is goalie Dylan St-Cyr, who was born in Las Vegas to a Canadian mom – iconic netminder Manon Rheume.

While both Canada and the U.S. have two of the top four programs (alongside Russia and Sweden), the pack is so close at the under-20 level right now that every edge is needed. And since the two North American teams share a border, a language and in some cases a league, that rivalry has become one of the fiercest around. The 2011 world juniors in Buffalo was a perfect example when the two squads clashed in the semifinal: the crowd was just as loud, if not louder, for Canada thanks to the huge amount of fans from southern Ontario.

Brett Hull is the most famous example of a dual citizen picking sides when he eschewed his birth nation of Canada for the more welcoming execs at Team USA, but the theme is picking up steam. There were accusations Hockey Canada approved Mississauga defenseman Sean Day for exceptional status a couple years ago to ensure the Belgian-born, Michigan-dwelling son of Canadian parents would rock the red maple leaf interna-

tionally. Ironically, the 2016 draft prospect was cut from Canada's Ivan Hlinka team this summer, but there's also no indication he has the paperwork to play for the United States anyway. It's a heated issue and one that isn't going away, especially when it affects some of the best young talents in the game today. **THE**



THE
LONG LOST
**GRETZKY
CONTRACT**

AN EXCERPT FROM *HOCKEY TOWNS* BY RON MACLEAN

The soon-to-be Great One was already a rich man by the time he'd made his way to the Soo as a teenager, where a clever classmate tried to cash in on a book deal



WAYNE GRETZKY PLAYED WITH STEVE BODNAR IN BRANTFORD, Ontario, in 1971, when they were both 10. That was the year Wayne scored 378 goals. The boys met up again at the international peewee tournament in Quebec City after Steve's family moved to the Soo. Sixteen thousand people filled the Colisée to watch 10-year-old Wayne Gretzky play as a peewee.

Wayne was drafted by the Greyhounds in 1977. He called Steve and said he had no idea where Sault Ste. Marie was, but he wasn't happy about it. He said he wasn't sure he wanted to move so close to the North Pole. But the Bodnars offered to have him stay with them, and so he relented. They fixed up a nice room in the basement with a desk and wood panelling, and Steve's mom made him butter tarts and cooked special meals for him before every game.

It was a lot of fun for Steve, living in the same house and playing road hockey and hanging out. Wayne seemed happy except for the flying. The Soo players would travel in an old DC-3, and there always seemed to be turbulence. Wayne was so terrified that he would often get violently ill just thinking about going on a road trip.

Of course, he was a rookie. Craig Hartsburg and Ted Nolan and Greg Millen, all those guys were the veterans on the team. One time, they made the rookies streak through Bellevue, a little park in town, but they set Wayne up. Once he got his clothes off, the police were waiting around the corner. So Wayne got out of the car and started running, when all of a sudden he was caught up in flashing lights and a siren. The police pulled him into their car, and because he had nothing on, he was totally embarrassed. He was also worried that his career was over before it had begun. Meanwhile, the officers were trying to keep a straight face. Part of his initiation also included a complete body shave – every hair. Steve's mother used to paint eyebrows on him so he could go out.

Wayne's nickname in the Soo was 'Pretzel,' because he was tall and kind of lanky. Later in Wayne's career, Steve dropped into a game in Detroit. Wayne was quite a distance away, surrounded by fans, so Steve couldn't get his attention. He took a chance and yelled, 'Pretzel!' Wayne turned around and headed over to say hi.

Rob Gordon's a beer-league hockey player from Oakville, Ontario, where I now reside. He grew up in the Soo. In 1978, he was in Grade 11 when a Greyhounds billet showed up at Sir James Dunn Collegiate. The seating plan was alphabetical, and the new kid's name was Wayne Gretzky, so he was sitting behind, beside or in front of Rob in seven different classes. Wayne didn't seem to be much different from anybody else,

maybe a bit more solid, but he was a lanky guy and fairly normal looking. All the guys wore Levi's jean jackets, brown Levi's corduroys, snap-button checked shirts, and three-striped Adidas sneakers or platform shoes. Wayne had a dirty-blond mullet that he tried to tame with a blow dryer, and he struggled with his teenage skin, but the girls liked him, just as they liked all the boys on the Greyhounds.

Rob and Wayne were classroom buddies. They'd chat before the teachers got going and then walk to their lockers together. Rob's dad was a research scientist for the Ontario government. He studied spruce genetics at a big lab in the Soo. Rob had the same sort of curiosity. He had big ideas and was always day-dreaming about things he could invent. He did a lot of ski racing and starting fooling around with the concept of miniature skis. He found an old pair of wooden skis in the basement and spent the whole afternoon cutting them down and then making a ski jump behind the local gas station. Of course, they snapped in half on the first run, but it was fun.

Wayne was gone from school for a couple of days in early June when Rob read in the Star that he was off with Nelson Skalbania, a real estate mogul who eventually landed in jail, but at the time he was wheeling and dealing in hockey franchises. Skalbania signed Wayne to his first big professional contract, with the Indianapolis Racers, for \$1.75 million.



THAT '70S SHOW

Childhood pal Bodnar talked Gretzky into giving Sault Ste. Marie a chance.

THE LONG LOST GRETZKY CONTRACT

FIRST BOOK DEAL

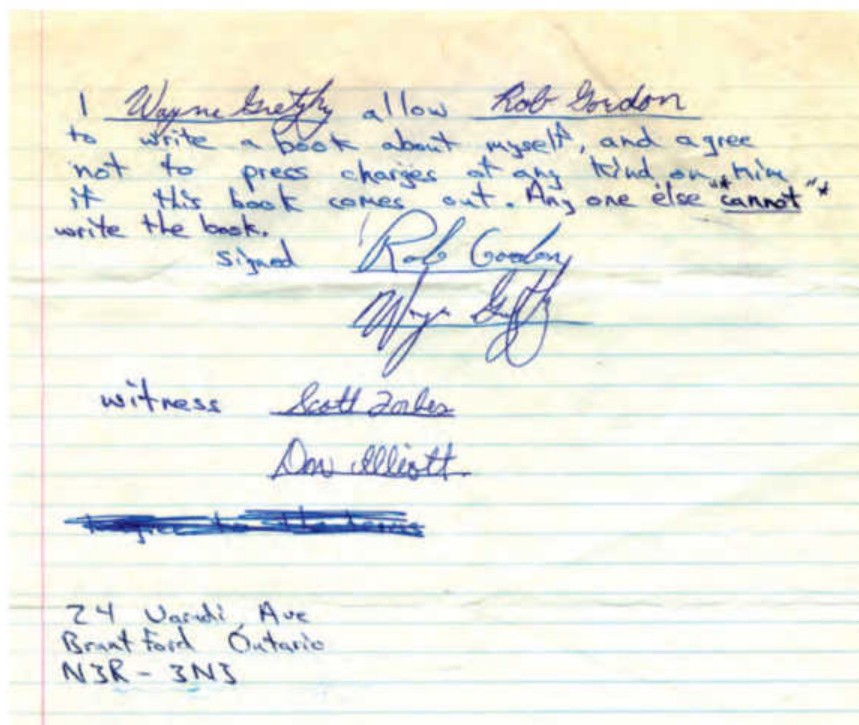
About the time Gretzky signed his first playing contract, he made a pact with a friend.

On Wednesday that week, Wayne rolled in driving a big 1977 Ford LTD. It had a two-tone paint job, a navy blue with kind of a light brown undercarriage. He'd driven the car all the way from the Brantford area. He walked into geography class and found his way over to his seat next to Rob at one of the big wooden tables to the left of the blackboard.

Rob greeted him enthusiastically. "Holy! I read the paper. You are going to be rich one day!" And then he corrected himself. "Actually, you're rich today! Surely I can get a piece of the action somehow?" Wayne kind of smiled. They both sat quietly and thought about it for a moment. Rob said, "How about I write a book about you?"

Wayne said, "Yeah, that would be a great idea. My dad's got a couple shoe boxes full of old pictures."

Rob said, "Yeah, I can put something together and I can write the first book about you." They started to talk about what it would entail when Rob said, "Well, wait a minute. Hold that thought," and



pulled out a piece of foolscap from his three-ring binder. He wrote, "I, (blank), allow (blank) to write a book about myself and agree not to press charges of any kind on him if the book comes out. Any one else cannot write the book. Signed (blank), witnessed (blank)." He handed it to Wayne and said, "Quick, sign this!" And without a thought, Wayne filled in all the blank spots. They both signed it, and then Rob turned to his two buddies, Scott Forbes and Don Elliot, and said, "Here, witness this."

And then Mrs. Morrow came in. She didn't tolerate too much goofing around. So Rob folded the piece of paper and put it in his binder. At the end of the year, he found it while cleaning out his books, so he put it in an envelope marked "DO NOT THROW AWAY" and stuck it at the back of his folks' filing cabinet, in a folder with his little art projects from public school.

Years later, Rob was in university, a poor student eating Kraft Dinner while watching Wayne win Stanley Cups. And then he remembered the envelope. He thought it might be a neat piece of memorabilia. He might even sell it. He went home and rummaged around and found it, but decided not to part with it.

Later, while working near a mine site in the middle of the Arctic and then travelling here and there, he decided to write some of his stories, including the story about Wayne. He called the book *I, Wayne Gretzky* and put Wayne's "contract" on the cover. Wayne, great guy that he is, went along with it and wrote the foreword for his old school buddy. That's not ordinary. It's extraordinary. Anyplace else, I guarantee, they'd Soo.

Excerpt from: *Hockey Towns* by Ron MacLean with Kirstie McLellan Day © 2015. Published by HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. All rights reserved.

A BOY NAMED SOO

Some of Gretzky's big-name Soo teammates were Craig Hartsburg and Greg Millen.



NOTE: COURTESY ROB GORDON, GRETZKY; LANE STEWART/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/GETTY IMAGES

THE ROOKIE WHO WOULDN'T LOSE

A generation before Hammond burst on the scene in Ottawa, Lalime was an unbeatable freshman goalie for the Pittsburgh Penguins

BY JARED CLINTON

IT WAS HIS DEBUT ON THE BIG STAGE. HIS FIRST NHL APPEARANCE came when he took the ice in relief. In less than half a game's work, he allowed three goals on 14 shots. If there was an NHL-ready starting goaltender under that equipment, it didn't shine through right away.

Then, miraculously, the run began – a string of remarkable play that had the entire league wondering where exactly this kid came from. Over his next 16 games, he set an NHL record for the longest unbeaten streak to begin a career, going 14-0-2.

While it sounds like the story of 27-year-old Andrew Hammond, who stole headlines with the Ottawa Senators in 2014-15, it's not. It's the tale of 22-year-old Pittsburgh goaltender Patrick Lalime, who became one of the NHL's great stories during the 1996-97 campaign, a season he recalls fondly. "I was a late pick, so you've got nothing to lose," Lalime said. "I enjoyed every minute of that run. The longer it gets, there's build up – the pressure and everything. When it ends, you're like, 'Whoa. That just happened. That was a pretty good run.'"

A pretty good run, indeed. From Dec. 6, 1996 to Jan. 21, 1997, Lalime earned 14 victories and two ties. That went along with a 1.69 goals-against average and .947 save percentage. It was enough to vault Lalime, whom the Penguins drafted 156th overall in 1993, into the Calder Trophy conversation. He wound up with a 21-12-2 record, 2.95 GAA and .913 SP, finishing fifth in the Calder race. "I remember my first shutout," Lalime said. "It was in San Jose. We won 4-0. At the end of the game, I remember Darius Kasparaitis picked the puck up and threw it in the stands. Everyone was like, 'Are you kidding me?!'"

Eventually, the team got the puck back. It cost a couple autographed sticks and Penguins merchandise, but that story has a happy ending. Unfortunately, Lalime's time in Pittsburgh did not. Shortly after his rookie campaign, there was a contract dispute that lasted 904 days – almost two and a half years. Lalime didn't suit up again in the NHL until he was an Ottawa Senator. "There was part of me that, yes, I did regret not being in the NHL," Lalime said. "But I'm the kind of guy who keeps looking forward and can't feel sorry for what happened."



BORN TO WIN

Lalime's unbeaten streak lasted more than six weeks, from his first NHL start to his 17th game.

At the end of the day, it turned out to be great for me in Ottawa."

That Lalime continued in Ottawa, where Hammond's emergence happened last season, is a happy coincidence. There's a number of similarities between the runs the goaltenders had, but the Senators connection makes the two even more alike. "It was fun to watch last year," Lalime said. "He was a guy that not a lot of people knew about in the minors who got a shot. He dominated more than me if you look at his first 20 games. Best start ever in the NHL."

“THERE WAS A PART OF ME THAT, YES, I DID REGRET NOT BEING IN THE NHL, BUT I KEEP LOOKING FORWARD

– Patrick Lalime

For Hammond, the doubters are coming out, much like they did for Lalime. Did he just catch lightning in a bottle? To Lalime, now an analyst with TVA Sports, it's about Hammond's mental game.

Eventually, Hammond, like Lalime, will show some cracks, but Lalime had some words of wisdom for the young netminder. "I had a chance to talk to him, and I said, 'A lot of people will be waiting for something bad to happen because they maybe don't believe in everything. The way you handle the situation going forward is going to make all the difference. You know your ability is there, so don't worry about what people think.'"



GRUMPY PUNCH & THE OLD MEN

The Maple Leafs last won the Stanley Cup in 1967 with a past-their-prime roster and a coach-GM who had a gut feeling

SO HOW IN THE WORLD DID THE TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS EVER manage to win their fourth Stanley Cup in six years in 1967?

For starters, the Leafs survived a mid-season 10-game losing streak and remained in playoff contention. When coach-GM Punch Imlach was hospitalized because of exhaustion and fatigue, president Stafford Smythe's replacement choice, Rochester's Joe Crozier, refused to undercut Imlach and take the coaching reins. Instead, Imlach's sidekick, Francis 'King' Clancy, went behind the bench and inspired an unlikely winning streak.

Meanwhile, Johnny Bower, 41, and Terry Sawchuk, 37, managed to play as if they were in their primes, as did the team's over-the-hill defensemen – Allan Stanley, Marcel Pronovost and Tim Horton who averaged 38 years of age. More than anything, Imlach emerged from the hospital oozing more confidence in his team than the two-million citizens of Toronto put together.

Amazingly, the Leafs gained a playoff berth but faced the

MR. BRAVADO

Imlach coached with his heart on his sleeve and wasn't shy about making bold proclamations.

league-leading Chicago Black Hawks, who finished 19 points ahead of them in the standings. After losing the opening game, Imlach was unfazed. "I had a feeling we'd bounce back," he insisted. As predicted, his club eventually took a 3-2 series lead. The suddenly sizzling Brian Conacher scored the series-clinching goal in Game 6. "He knocked down defenseman Ed Van Impe, retrieved the puck, went in and scored," Imlach remembered.

That catapulted the Leafs into the final against Montreal and, after the opening game, just about everyone wondered how Imlach's players ever got into the playoffs. Sawchuk looked like he couldn't stop a Goodyear blimp, and after two periods Bower replaced him. Final score: 6-2 for the Habs. Montreal skated like Mercury compared to the snowshoeing Leafs. The horde of Toronto media skeptics left Imlach both defiant and hostile but, most of all, undaunted. The morning after the one-sided defeat, he brazenly marched into the pressroom and boasted to one and all that his Leafs would win the Cup.

In his autobiography, *Hockey is a Battle*, Imlach recalled a novice hockey writer from Los Angeles approached him in astonishment. "All he did," he wrote, "was peer at me for a long time and then said slowly, 'Are you for real?'"

Imlach showed the same bravado an hour later when he strode into a clothing store and ordered a bizarre green checked suit. He told the tailor he planned to wear it "on the night we win the Cup." The clothier shot back that Imlach would then have to wait several years before donning the wild-looking outfit.

No way. Inspired by their seemingly mad leader, the Leafs rebounded to take a 3-2 series lead – but at great cost. Ever reliable Bower popped a muscle, leaving Toronto with a battered and inconsistent Sawchuk. Imlach knew Bower was done yet demanded his cracked 'China Wall' sit in uniform on the bench. "You won't be asked to play," Imlach said, "but just be there."

With his players gearing up in the dressing room, Imlach – who it was said had a paving stone for a heart – suddenly turned so sentimental he moved some of his vets to tears. "It's been said," he told them, "that I stuck with you old men so long we couldn't possibly win. For some of you it's farewell. Go out there and put that puck down their throats." His speech completed, he donned his green-checked suit and walked to the bench.

Meanwhile, the Canadiens figured they had the game in the bag. They had beaten Sawchuk twice by 6-2 scores. Imlach just prayed Sawchuk, still feeling the effects of a bashed ankle and smashed nose, would hang in there.

Sawchuk held on while Ron Ellis and Jim Pappin staked his Leafs to a 2-1 lead, which lasted into the final minute of play but with a faceoff in the Toronto zone. Then, to everyone's astonishment, Imlach turned sentimental once more, gambling on his venerable core. He told some of his senior skaters – George Armstrong, Red Kelly, Horton, Stanley and Bob Pulford – to get out there and defuse the Habs. "I figured it would be the last game some of them would play," he said. "What better than to turn to my old guard?"

Stanley, a defenseman, won the faceoff from Jean Beliveau while Kelly retrieved the rubber and passed it to Pulford who spotted Armstrong on the right wing. The captain hit the bulls-eye and Toronto won 3-1, its fourth championship in six years. "It was the most satisfying Stanley Cup I ever won," Imlach said.

And as most of Toronto and the civilized hockey world know, its most recent Stanley Cup. **TIM**



BOSTON BRUINS | 2015-16

Jersey HOUND

The Bruins have worn several really cool jerseys throughout their long history, so there's a nice assortment to choose from when the club is in need of a throwback.

For this season's Winter Classic, in which Boston will host Montreal, the Bruins have gone all the way back to the beginning, using their 1924-25 sweater as inspiration. Now, that shirt was brown – and literally a turtleneck – so alterations were made, but the result is a cool mix of the old and new.

The retro feel is there, but with some nice upgrades, such as big numbers on the arms. That will help fans watching in the football stadium – and the gold frame on the numbers really pop. – RYAN KENNEDY

CROSSWORD

By Larry Humber



ANSWERS AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND AT THN.com/XWORD

LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD SOLUTION ACROSS 1. AIR CANADA, 8. WHITE, 9. TIMMINS, 10. GRAHAM, 11. AGENTS, 12. SIREN, 14. RHODE, 17. BARBER, 19. CASSIE, 20. ALSO-RAN, 21. NIETO, 22. RON SUTTER
DOWN ICING, 3. CEMENT, 4. NONIS, 5. AWARDS, 6. RICHARD, 7. NETMINDER, 11. AMERICANS, 13. WORSLEY, 15. EDITOR, 16. TRYOUT, 17. BULLS, 18. ERASE

ACROSS

- 1 'Mac-T' was GM in Edmonton
- 8 What the 'A' in UFA stands for
- 9 They say, 'Offense sells tickets, but ____ wins championships'
- 10 The Isles played at ____ Coliseum for decades
- 11 Nimble
- 12 One-sided trade
- 14 The Hawks have won three Cups since the ____ last won one
- 17 Hockey boots
- 19 Slang for the head
- 20 One who boos or jeers a player or team
- 21 A '____ apple' once served as a puck in rural areas
- 22 Restore amateur standing to a player who turned pro

DOWN

- 2 Lead, be ____
- 3 ____ Linden, pictured, calls shots in Vancouver
- 4 Pay a call on
- 5 Pester
- 6 'The Moose'
- 7 The Flyers were once known as 'The Broad ____'
- 11 They were Cups winners in 1996 and 2001
- 13 Wisconsin's teams go by this nickname
- 15 Gifted goal scorer
- 16 Nick Foligno is a Blue ____
- 17 Alexander ____ is with St. Louis
- 18 Toss out

Behind THE MASK

ANTON KHUDOBIN | ANAHEIM DUCKS

Khudobin sticks with his sorcerer theme on this lid, designed by Sylvie Marsolais, but now it's a duck instead of a man casting the spells. Flapping mallards envelope the other side. The names of Khudobin's old Russian club teams appear on the top to remind him of his path to the NHL. – MATT LARKIN



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THE MANAGERS WHO CRY WOLF

Teams got their cap and poaching compensation, only to pounce on loopholes. How will they mess up 3-on-3?



JOHN TORTORELLA

YOU REALLY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO blame NHL commissioner Gary Bettman for being a little bewildered these days. He sits there and listens to his owners and hockey people complain like entitled teenagers about the way things are run. He goes about changing them by putting rules and policies in place. And then he watches as those same complainers do everything they can to skirt those rules and regulations for their own benefit.

Take, for instance, the NHL's policy for compensating teams that lose management personnel. For years, Bettman listened to teams grouse about losing good people in whom they had invested a significant amount of money and resources to other teams without being compensated. So, the NHL decided last year to compensate teams losing coaches and GMs by awarding a third-round draft pick if the poaching is done out of season, a second-rounder if it's in-season. "Managers for years cajoled, begged, pleaded, demanded we make a change," Bettman said at the Cup final in June. "They wanted something straightforward and simple, although I don't know if there was anything more straightforward and simple than what we had."

Anyone with any sense of integrity would know what the spirit of that rule should be. It should not allow teams such as the Vancouver Canucks to be relieved of much of their salary burden for John Tortorella and be given a second-round pick in one of the next three drafts as compensation for their long-fired-and-forgotten coach signing with the Columbus Blue Jackets. I've talked to several GMs who had no idea this would happen when the policy was first announced and are adamant that demanding compensation for someone who has already been fired violates the spirit of the rule.

But I also have no doubt that, given the

opportunity to use it in their favor, those same GMs would demand the draft pick compensation without batting an eyelash. It's human nature, one would suppose, which is exactly why these people often need to be saved from themselves. It's why many sports have a salary cap, for heaven's sake. People who run professional sports teams have an uncanny inability to look beyond the end of their noses when it comes to rules.

For years, owners and some GMs complained salaries were getting out of control, that the NHL needed a salary cap to restore competitive balance. (Although you could argue the competitive balance that exists today has absolutely nothing to do with the salary cap, since the league is no closer and there's no smaller gap between the good teams and bad ones than there was prior to the cap.) No sooner had these people received exactly what they wanted – and shut down the league for the 2004-05 season to get it – than they began manipulating the process by offering front-loaded contracts they knew violated the spirit of the salary cap. And the ink was barely dry on the CBA before GMs appealed to the league to rescind the regulation that did not allow teams to renew contracts of entry-level players until they expired.

And now teams that find the salary floor too difficult to reach are trading for the likes of Marc Savard and Chris Pronger, injured players who have no hope of ever playing again but are on contracts that carry a high cap hit, to fill their obligations. The salaries they have to pay are protected by insurance and yet they get credit for having them on the payroll. It's a win-win as they call it. It's also distasteful.

Prior to this season, hockey people argued the shootout was a sham, a sideshow, an individual skills competition that had no place in the game. So the

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PEOPLE WHO RUN PRO SPORTS TEAMS HAVE AN UNCANNY INABILITY TO LOOK BEYOND THE END OF THEIR NOSES

NHL listened and instituted 3-on-3 overtime in an effort to open up the extra five minutes and create better chances for the game to be decided without a shootout. Already we're hearing teams are concerned their best players are getting tired because they've played the last minute of the game and the bulk of overtime. And it will only be a matter of time before coaches adapt to the increased ice surface and somehow drag 3-on-3 OT into the muck. That is what they do.

The problem here is that every rule or regulation the NHL passes carries with it the law of unintended consequences. And there will never be a shortage of people who will be willing to pounce upon those consequences and use them for their own gains.

Bettman said the league will continue with this compensation scheme until Jan. 1 when it will be revisited and, we can only hope, revised. It's a simple fix, really. It's a matter of telling teams they forfeit any right to compensation once they fire an employee. In fact, it's astonishing to think those who made the rule didn't think to include it in the first place.

By doing that, it will be able to at least plug that dyke, until a leak springs somewhere else. **TEN**

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